5-1-1943

The Theology Philo

Roland Frantz
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_frantzr@csl.edu

THE THEOLOGY OF PHILO

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty

of

Concordia Seminary

by

Roland A. Frantz

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

of

Bachelor of Divinity

St. Louis, Missouri

May, 1943

Approved by

A. M. Rehwinkel

Paul Bretscher

Foreword

Only within the last century, apparently, has any serious study been made of the Jewish philosopher, Philo. Just why a man of such ingenuity and intelligence should be relegated to the background is not clear. Perhaps, it is because Philo occupies a unique position in the progress of human thought. On the one hand, he was a philosopher. Yet, because his philosophy lacks originality, and because he uses it so arbitrarily, he cannot be classed among the world's great philosophers. On the other hand, Philo was, in a sense, a theologian. He was a devout Jew and, as such, had a high regard for the Old Testament Scriptures, particularly, the writings of Moses. It was his avowed purpose to commend the sacred Scriptures to the Greek world. And yet, because of his over-emphasis on allegory, he cannot be regarded as a serious interpreter of Scripture, for it is difficult to understand a man who would cast aside the obvious meaning of a Scriptural passage in favor of such an exaggerated use of allegory. Strictly speaking, then, Philo's system is neither philosophy nor theology; it is a mixture of elements from both.

But because his doctrine of the Logos is the center of his system, a study of Philo commends itself to every advanced Bible student. For this reason also we have in the following pages payed particular attention to Philo's Logos concept. We have made no special attempt to evaluate Philo's theology.

Nor is it within the scope of this thesis to draw parallels between Philo and the works of later Christian writers. That is a study in itself.

All sources and material used are listed in the bibliography. The references to Philo's works are based on the Colson and Whitaker edition (Greek and English), the Roman numerals indicating the book in the treatise, the Arabic numbers denoting the particular paragraph.

Finally, we wish to express our appreciation to Prof. A. M. Rehwinkel and Dr. Paul Bretscher, under whose helpful direction this thesis was written, and whose interest in the project provided us real encouragement.

Roland A. Frantz

St. Louis, Missouri,
May 15, 1943

Contents

I

Philo and Alexandrian Thought

Following the conquests of Alexander the Great, the city of Alexandria became one of the chief centers of intellectual and commercial activity. It was the great world conqueror's purpose to make that city the greatest city in the world. His successors, the Ptolemies, fulfilled this purpose. Alexandria became the site of a great museum, a library containing, at a very conservative estimate, 400,000 volumes, a famous light-house, but of more importance, the center of Greek culture and philosophy.

Numerous Jews migrated to Egypt under the Ptolemies because of the cordial treatment they received in addition to the grant of full citizenship. It is estimated that at Philo's time about a million Jews inhabited Egypt. Also in Alexandria, the Jewish citizenry must have been very large. It is said that the synogogue there was so immense that an official standing on a platform had to wave his head-cloth or veil to inform the people at the back of the edifice when to say "Amen" in response to the reader.[1] Naturally the Jews brought with them their Torah and their tradition.

Now, it is evident, that the fusion of Greek and Jewish

---

1. Norman Bentwich, Philo Judaeus of Alexandria, p. 16

ideas was inevitable in Egypt. The Jews there, in spite of their exclusive tendencies, could hardly expect to remain aloof and absolutely untouched by the secular Gentile culture surrounding them. For one thing, there was the influence of the Greek language. Within a hundred years of their settlement in Alexandria, Hebrew and Aramaic had become "foreign" languages to the Jews, for they were gradually compelled to speak the Greek.

But Hellenism had a far more pervasive influence upon the Egyptian Jews. Not only was their daily life, their culture affected, but the Jews soon began to feel the forces of Hellenism encroaching upon their religion. It meant that because few could read or understand the Hebrew, it was necessary to have a Greek translation of the Holy Scriptures. Out of this necessity arose the Septuagint translation, begun during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, about 250 B.C. Surrounded by pagan Egyptian and Greek cults, it is not surprising that the more liberal-minded Jews began to be influenced by heathenism. No more were they in the comparative safety and solitude of Palestine, where outside influence was not as great, but they were now surrounded by people who had a different philosophy of life, who lived and who thought differently. And the more liberal minded became interested and curious to become acquainted with this new philosophy. Nor was it only the more liberal minded who were thus affected. The orthodox and faithful sons of Abraham also desired to know what Greek and Egyptian religion was like, because, still

conscious of their position as God's chosen people and therefore the possessors of divine truth, they realized the opportunity that confronted them of proving to the Gentiles the superiority of their own religion.

Yet aside from these factors, Judaism in general, be it the liberal kind or the orthodox, could not escape Hellenizing influences in their religion. By the very nature of Greek culture and thought, which is attractive to the cultured, contemplative mind, a fertile field was furnished the curious mind. The Jews began to study Greek philosophy and to use the phrases of philosophy, so that before long philosophy was interwoven with their religion. Particularly, those parts of their doctrines which apparently had some outward resemblance to Greek speculation gradually came to be identified.

But the amalgamation of these two systems of thought involved reciprocal tendencies. Judaism did not lose its identity completely, nor was it the passive element in the fusion of Greek and Hebrew thought. The Jews never, either as a result of subtle influence or by forceful persuasion, gave up their monotheism and their veneration for Moses and the prophets. As a matter of fact, the Greeks, in Egypt, too, could not escape the influence which the Jews had on them. Greeks and Romans became acquainted with Jewish beliefs and customs. It is believed that religion influenced Greek philosophy perhaps to as great a degree as religion itself was influenced by Greek speculation. The whole

Neo-Platonic system, which was a later development, was essentially a religious philosophy, while Alexandrian theology was really a philosophical religion. A reason for the susceptibility of Greek thought to Hebrew religion is suggested by Bentwich, who remarks that the Greek world was at this time losing faith in the "poetical gods of its mythology and in the metaphysical powers of its philosophical schools," and was searching for something more real and reliable. It was attracted to Judaism, for in the place of the gods of nature, or the impersonal world force, the Jews offered them the God of history.[2] At any rate, the evident conviction on the part of the Jews regarding their own religion must have been an influence on the Greeks.

The task to which Jewish philosophers set themselves, then, was this - to harmonize Greek philosophy with Jewish monotheism. Their purpose was, first of all, to strengthen the Alexandrian Jews themselves, who had undoubtedly begun to entertain many doubts and were on the verge of apostasy, and, secondly, to adapt the sacred Scriptures to the Greek world. From the very outset, the task of reconciling two such opposing systems was almost a hopeless one, although the Jewish philosophers believed they had accomplished this by the use of allegory. Allegorical interpretation formed the basis of the whole Jewish-Alexandrian philosophy. Thus, the Jews could interpret their sacred Scriptures in terms

---

2. Bentwich, op. cit., p.33.

of philosophy. Of course, a real harmony never was effected, but the result was a new method of exegesis, which, in turn, produced a peculiar kind of literature.

Probably the first step in this Jewish-Hellenistic development was the Septuagint version of the Bible, which permitted Jew and Greek to meet on common ground. The first of the Alexandrians to use allegorical interpretation for the purpose of harmonizing Greek ideas with the Bible is believed to be Aristobulus. The authenticity of his writings is disputed, but he is supposed to have written about the beginning of the first century B.C. Other products of the Jewish-Alexandrian philosophy were the Letter of Aristeas, written about 100 B.C., which pretends to give an account of the origin of the Septuagint translation, the Wisdom of Solomon, the Sybilline Oracles, etc. In all these works the object was to present the God of the Jews as the only true God, and to show that all philosophy was really dependent upon Judaism.

It remained for Philo to put the finishing touches to the Jewish-Alexandrian philosophy. In him the whole development of Jewish-Greek thought reached its culmination. He was its most distinguished representative. In his hands, allegory, for the purpose of enabling the Jew and the Greek to understand each other, reached its highest development. Philo even believed he had a sacred mission to interpret the Scriptures to the Greeks. A great part of the Jewish-Hellenistic literature is believed to have been lost, but in Philo's works we have the full development of this period. Thus,

Philo's works are more than the expression of an individual mind; they are, in fact, "the record and expression of a great culture."[3] Although not developing a complete system, and though he himself is often vague and even contradictory in his teachings, he clearly shows the tendency of his age. In the final analysis, then, it would be difficult to understand the position of such a man, particularly, when he himself is inconsistent. But, perhaps we can arrive at some general conception of his more apparent conclusions. That Philo was extremely versatile cannot be denied, for he touches upon innumerable subjects in the fields of philosophy, science, politics, religion, law, psychology and ethics.

Of Philo's life we know very little. In fact, concerning only one incident do we have any definite information, namely, his mission to Rome. The precise year of his birth is not known, but scholars are generally agreed that he was born between 10 and 20 B.C., probably nearer the latter date. He was a resident of the great city of Alexandria, belonging to one of the most distinguished and wealthiest Jewish families of the city. It is a question, however, whether or not he was of the priestly rank. Opinion is divided on this matter and we cannot be sure. Even if this distinction were conceded to him, it is doubtful whether such a distinguishing mark would carry great prestige in the Hellenized city of Alexandria.

---

3. Bentwich, op. cit., p. 77.

His brother, Alexander Lysimachus,[4] one of the foremost and wealthiest men in the Jewish community, was magistrate and alabarch, or chief farmer of taxes on the Arabian side of the Nile. It is said that at one time he lent Herod Agrippa two hundred thousand drachmae, and that the gold and silver plates covering the nine gates of the temple at Jerusalem were the gift of Alexander.[5] Furthermore, Alexander's two sons seem to have followed in the socially prominent footsteps of their father, for the one, Marcus, was married to Berenice, the daughter of Herod, and the other, Tiberius Julius Alexander, having deserted his religion, ventured upon a political career, which elevated him from a general in Egypt to Roman procurator in Palestine, and finally to a position immediately below Titus.[6]

Although of such a wealthy and influential family, Philo himself was not attracted by wealth or politics, but was of a studious, contemplative disposition. Yet it is rather ironical to learn that the only incident of his life about which there are some details, is an incident which involves him in a serious political situation. That event was his journey to Rome, in the year 40 A.D., as the head of an embassy of five, to plead the case of his people before the emperor Gaius Caligula. According to the decree of the emperor, his own

---

4. In his History of Israel, Ewald questions this relationship between Philo and Alexander, contending that, according to newly discovered passages, Alexander was Philo's nephew. But more recent scholars make no mention of these "newly discovered passages" and regard the two men as brothers.

5. Erwin Goodenough, An Introduction to Philo Judaeus, p.3.

6. Ibid., p. 4.

statue was to be placed in all Jewish temples, and was to be worshipped. This the Jews refused to do, and, as a result, they were persecuted. When it was decided that a special embassy should be sent to Rome to ask that the Jews be exempted from paying the emperor divine honors, Philo, no doubt because of his great reputation and patriotism, was chosen at the head. The mission was unsuccessful. Philo and his colleagues were mocked and made sport of, Philo's brother was thrown into prison (to be released later by Claudius whose friendship he had gained), and the rest of them fled. For a man so devoted to his people and to their tradition, this must have been a bitter disappointment for Philo, and we are, perhaps, safe in assuming that some of those treatises in which he attacks the Gentiles, were written after, and were the result of, this shameful treatment on the part of Caligula. From now on, says Bentwich, "he was the public defender as well as the teacher of his people."[7]

Now upon the dating of this event in the year 40 A.D., to which historians agree, is based the chronology of Philo's life, as well as the apparent change in his outlook on life. In a treatise describing the events of A.D. 40 he speaks of himself as an old man (γέρων), and from this it is conjectured that he was born about 20 B.C. As to the date of his death, it is also assumed that he died about the year 50 A.D. At least, this is accepted by most writers. In Jewish history,

---

7. Bentwich, op. cit., p. 45.

then, Philo's life was contemporaneous with the reigns of King Herod, his sons, and King Agrippa. He was also partly contemporary with Hillel, who came from Babylon to Jerusalem in 30 B.C. The period of his teaching is practically simultaneous with that of Jesus, John the Baptist, and partly with the life of Paul. Of the rest of Philo's life we have no authentic information.

As to his personal character and way of life we are entirely dependent upon passages taken from his own writings, and even from these we learn very little, for Philo was not given to speak of himself. But an occasional passage reveals the type of person that he was. Already from his early youth Philo devoted himself to a life of contemplation and study. In spite of his being born under wealthy and socially prominent circumstances, he spurned love of the world and devoted himself to philosophy. He regarded it as man's highest duty to study the Law and to strive to know God. We shall point out later how this was to be accomplished. But it should be remarked here that there is a two-fold stage in Philo's approach to this attainment of righteousness. In his early days Philo regarded the way to virtue and happiness to lie in the solitary and ascetic life. He looked upon the world and society as evil, so that man should flee from these things if he would know God.[8] Accordingly, he spent his youth and early manhood in studying

---

8. While Philo was in sympathy with ascetic ideas and habits, especially those of the Essenes, and although he speaks of a Jewish brotherhood of ascetics living alone near the mouth of the Nile, he nowhere says that he belonged to their society.

philosophy and in contemplating the universe.

But, apparently, in his maturity Philo reversed himself. He no longer regarded asceticism as the ideal way of life, but looked upon moderation as the road to righteousness. This dualism in his point of view, this conflict between the contemplative and the practical life, is best seen from his own words. In one passage he says of himself:

> "There was a time when I had leisure for philosophy and for the contemplation of the universe and its contents, when I made its spirit my own in all its beauty and loveliness and true blessedness, when my constant companions were divine themes and verities, wherein I rejoiced with a joy that never cloyed or sated. I had no base or abject thoughts nor grovelled in search of reputation or of wealth or bodily comforts, but seemed always to be borne aloft into the heights with a soul possessed by some God-sent inspiration, a fellow-traveller with the sun and moon and the whole heaven and universe."[9]

In another place he says:

> "For many a time have I myself forsaken friends and kinsfolk and country and came into a wilderness, to give my attention to some subject demanding contemplation, and derived no advantage from doing so, but my mind scattered or bitten by passion has gone off to matters of the contrary kind. Sometimes, on the other hand, amid a vast throng I have a collected mind. God has dispersed the crowd that besets the soul and taught me that a favourable and unfavourable condition are not brought about by difference of place, but by God who moves and leads the car of the soul in whatever way He pleases."[10]

It may well be that the fortunes of his fellow-Jews in Alexandria, their persecution and hardships, contributed to this reversal of attitude and to his involvement in public affairs, for he was truly a Jew devoted to his people. But

---

9. The Special Laws, III, 1.

10. Allegorical Interpretation, II, 85.

whatever the cause may be, it is obvious that he did experience a change of attitude. The solitary, contemplative life emerged into the social and active life. Nevertheless, Philo was far from giving up his contemplation and speculation even in his later years, for, indeed, this was the way to know God.

Being intensely interested in learning, he early acquired an education in all the subjects prominent in his day. Because of his family's wealth, and because the city of Alexandria was then the chief center of the world's wisdom, Philo had unusual opportunities for education. He busied himself with all branches of learning, becoming acquainted with Greek, Egyptian, Chaldean, Persian and even Indian thought. He studied, and became well versed in, all the prominent schools of philosophy of his day - Platonic, Stoic, Skeptic and Pythagorean. It is said, he became "the most distinguished Platonist of his age,"[11] and can be regarded as "representative of the best attainments of the Judeanism of that age."[12]

But Philo was more than a pedantic intellectual. He was sincere, was devoted to Scripture and to the welfare of his people, and he loved virtue. While he was, by and large, not an ascetic, neither did he countenance hilarious living. He disapproved of the ostentation of Alexandrian society, and he rebukes the idolatry of the Egyptians. His advice was to avoid the two extremes and to choose the middle course, the way of temperance and virtue.[13] Philo was truly a man of high moral

---

11. Bentwich, op. cit., p. 48.

12. Georg Ewald, History of Israel, Vol. VII, p. 195.

13. It is true, this does not agree with his earlier views, but I think we are justified in regarding his more mature outlook on life as representative of the man.

character, and his devotion to the Law and to the Scriptures is hard to match. In his views on practical life it is sometimes amazing to note the outward resemblance to Christian principles. Moreover, simplicity of life was evidently emulated by Philo's wife. The story is told that, when asked why she, who was so rich, did not wear the costly ornaments and jewelry peculiar to her social standing, replied, "The virtue of the husband is adornment enough for the wife."[14]

Although living in Alexandria practically all his life, Philo is known to have made one other journey outside Egypt, besides his trip to Rome. In his treatise De Providentia he speaks of going to Jerusalem to worship - as every faithful Jew was wont to do. This probably occurred about 30 A.D., during the reign of Agrippa, who was a personal friend of Philo's family.[15]

As far as his outward life and circumstances are concerned, this is about all we know of Philo. But of his thoughts and attitudes and convictions we learn more from his writings. In fact, as we study the nature of his works and observe the method of his approach, Philo emerges as a man of many aspects. He is a profound, though not always a consistent, thinker, and his writings have assumed voluminous proportions. It is believed that those works which are extant form only about one half of his total writings.

In order to understand Philo at all, one must understand

---

14. Heinrich Graetz, History of the Jews, Vol. II, p. 186.
15. Bentwich, op. cit., p. 50.

his method of interpretation. To Philo, allegory was the key which unlocked the Scriptures. To be sure, he was not the first to employ allegory, but he certainly gave it new importance. It is perhaps not saying too much to remark that under Philo allegory was used as it had never been used before.

When we think of the task to which Philo addressed himself, we begin to see why allegory played such a prominent part in his system, yes, why it was the center and core of his system. Philo was essentially a Jew. He regarded the Old Testament, especially the Mosaic Law, as the supreme authority, venerating it "as if it were God." He adhered strictly to the inspiration of the Holy Scripture, regarding every word, every letter as divinely inspired. For him, Moses was the supreme philosopher and law-giver of the world. Accordingly, the Greek philosophers and poets were but "broken lights" of Moses. Thus, in Philo's estimation the Pentateuch was the source of the highest wisdom, and while the other Old Testament writers were also inspired, they were merely disciples of Moses.

On the other hand, Philo was a Greek philosopher, having become acquainted with, and holding in high esteem, the prominent philosophies of the day, especially, that of Plato. In fact, he thought so much of Plato and borrowed so extensively from him, that it has been said, "either Philo Platonizes or Plato Philonizes." But inasmuch as he borrowed freely from several other philosophic systems, notably the Pythagorean and Stoic, he is very properly called an eclectic.

Philo's task was to reconcile Greek philosophy and culture

with traditional Jewish faith. His purpose was two-fold. In the first place, he wanted to show that between faith and philosophy there was no conflict and, secondly, he wished to establish the Torah as well as Judaism on a firm foundation for the edification of the man of outside culture. The result was that "to the Greek world he offered a philosophic religion, to his own people a religious philosophy."[16]

But was it possible to accomplish this task? Could a divine revelation be harmonized with human speculation? Could monotheism be reconciled with polytheism? Philo believed he found the answer. True to his Jewish faith, he subordinated Greek philosophy to the Hebrew Scriptures, and with the instrument of allegory he worked out his doctrines. His premise is that the Greek philosophers borrowed from the Old Testament and from Moses. He attempts to show that whatever good is found in the Greek philosophemes was nothing original, but that, on the contrary, Moses had taught it long ago. Yet, I think, it would be more correct to say that, actually, Philo borrowed many of his doctrines from the Greeks and, using Scripture in a very loose way, tried to create the impression that the Greeks borrowed them from Moses.

However, Philo's task was a rather hopeless one, and no matter how sincere and earnest may have been his effort at harmonizing these two modes of thought, "the amalgamation is somewhat external and incomplete."[17] Philo was striving to

---

16. Bentwich, op. cit., p. 96.

17. Edward Caird, The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers, Vol. II, p. 190.

reconcile opposites. As Caird has put it, "the Hebrew mind is intuitive, imaginative, almost incapable of analysis or of systematic connection of ideas", while "the Greek mind, on the other hand, is essentially discursive, analytical, and systematic, governing itself even in its highest flights by the ideas of measure and symmetry, of logical sequence and connection."[18] These two divergent systems of thought -- the one, reason, the other, revelation -- Philo tried to reconcile. While a general failure to attain this objective was, by the very nature of the circumstances, precluded, Philo saw no difficulty in his attempt, and actually worked out a detailed system. By the use of allegory he believed he found the answer.

Yet, while the method of allegory was a highly serviceable instrument in the approach to the problem, it was, actually a necessary instrument. It was, perhaps, the only vehicle which could convey Greek thought to the Jewish mind and vice versa. And so, allegorical exposition became almost a necessity with Philo, so that "had he not already found it in use, he would doubtless have invented it."[19]

Philo's general principle is that, in addition to the literal meaning for the common man, the Bible has a hidden and deeper meaning for the philosopher. Not everyone is able to go beneath the surface and learn the true meaning; only the man who is practiced in philosophy and meditation can do this. Thus, Scripture is a sort of palimpsest. In studying the Scripture,

---

18. Ibid., P. 188ff.
19. Graetz, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 210.

one should give heed, not only to the words and terms, but to the spirit of the writings, because the true meaning lies under the surface, and words are only a means of conveyance accomodating to man. On this point Philo says:

> "We should look on all these outward observances as resembling the body, and their inner meanings as resembling the soul. It follows that, exactly as we have to take thought for the body, because it is the abode of the soul, so we must pay heed to the letter of the laws. If we keep and observe these, we shall gain a clearer conception of those things of which these are symbols."[20]

That his method lacked system and consistency seems to be of no concern to Philo. He employs it at his own pleasure, so that it becomes an instrument by which he can deduce anything from anything. In fact, it is so flexible, that he is known to take a certain passage and deduce different ideas from the same terms, or to apply wholly different terms to the same idea. In reality, his own practice is inconsistent with his theory, for, on the one hand, he firmly believes in the verbal inspiration of Scriptures, whose teachings contain the highest and ultimate truth, while, on the other hand, because of his preconceived notions, he introduces foreign matters into the text of Scripture, which render verbal inspiration null and void, and thus he becomes involved in a vicious circle. Moreover, he feels free at any time to take a Hebrew name or word, substitute some supposed Greek equivalent, and then ramble on in his exposition. In itself this is certainly a dangerous and misleading method. But when a man of Philo's ingenuity and imagination employs such a method of

---

20. On The Migration of Abraham, 93

interpretation, we are not surprised at the far-fetched and, at times, nonsensical thoughts that are deduced.

The difficulty now arises, how, if the very words of the Hebrew text are inspired, can we be sure that the Greek text has caught the meaning. For Philo this was no problem, because he regarded the LXX also as verbally inspired.[21] Inspiration was ascribed to the translators even in the choice of words, and hence, he bases all his arguments on the LXX. But this, too, seems to have been a necessity for Philo. Ignorant of, or at best, only superficially acquainted with, Hebrew, he was compelled to use the Greek in his study. At the same time he freely takes a Hebrew name and promiscuously substitutes some Greek term, or he interprets a Hebrew word according to Greek etymology. It is not surprising then, that his entire treatment and application of the Bible becomes defective and false. It is true, he does not impress one as being whimsical in his approach, or indifferent to falsification, for he seems to have pursued his task with all seriousness, and apparently believed he was expounding the original and only true meaning. But he was unconsciously led to an exaggerated use of allegory. Everything in the Pentateuch, its historical significance being obliterated, was interpreted allegorically, and, as a result, personages and places became "the cold puppets of a mystical philosophy."[22] Even within

---

21. It is a controversial point whether Philo had any knowledge of the Hebrew language. Several authorities believe that he was entirely ignorant of Hebrew, while the most that is said for him on this point is that he had a working knowledge of Hebrew.

22. James Drummond, Philo Judaeus, Vol. I, p. 22.

Judaism, this promiscuous use of allegory threatened to have evil consequences, because it led to two extremes. Some disregarded the literal sense and began to allegorize away the law, including numerous ceremonial observances. It is even said that allegory became so general and intriguing that the masses lost all interest in the simple stories of the Holy Scripture, and "took more delight in artificial explanations than in the plain lessons and sublime laws of their sacred books."[23] Others adhered strictly to the literal sense of Scripture and rejected allegory. Philo seems to have chosen the middle course, being "liberal in thought and conservative in practice."[24]

Though our religious philosopher had no definite system nor any definite rules regarding his allegory, he does seem to follow for definite reasons various principles. For one thing, everything anthropomorphic had to be changed into some spiritual or philosophic truth. He regarded it as being unworthy of God to speak of Him as having arms, a body, or as laughing or repenting. These were merely forms of speech for man's accommodation, but were unsuited to the Deity. Furthermore, the literal sense must be excluded wherever Scripture seems to be involved in a discrepancy, as, for example, where numbers or relationships in a particular family seemingly do not agree. Finally, allegorical interpretation must be used wherever Scripture seems to require it, as, for instance, when

---

23. Graetz, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 209.

24. Bentwich, op. cit., p. 40.

it speaks of the trees of knowledge, and of life, or of the serpent speaking. These seem to be general principles which he followed in his interpretation.[25] With the use of such principles the bars are let down and the doors are wide open for arbitrary and subjective interpretation. He defies the rules of hermeneutics and gets around this by saying that only the higher and more capable minds can understand the deeper meanings of Scripture. Accordingly, he at times, offers some interesting and thought-provoking conclusions, but only too often he toys with the sacred Scriptures and deduces some fantastic explanations. Of course, his difficulty lay in his purpose, with the result that "the Scriptures are ruthlessly robbed of their historical significance, and made the scaffolding for the erection of a philosophical system in many respects alien to their real meaning."[26]

A word may be said about Philo's writings. We are accustomed to refer to Philo as a philosopher, but he really had no definite, coherent philosophic system. His purpose was to defend the teachings of Moses and to show that they contained the highest philosophical truth, and not to write a new philosophy. For that reason he never traces a philosophical question to its logical conclusion. Rather is his philosophy in the form of biblical exposition, or as Zeller puts it, it is "Jewish theology mixed with Greek

---

25. It may be, according to Drummond, that a school of allegorical expositors existed at Philo's time, which had fixed laws by which they were guided.

26. William Fairweather, Jesus and the Greeks, p. 186

mysticism";[27] rather than real philosophy. Taking the Pentateuch, he proceeds verse by verse and gives an exegesis of the Scriptures, all the while injecting into it, by means of allegory, his philosophical ideas. Thus, his works are nothing but philosophical commentaries on the books of Moses, inasmuch as his various conceptions, which lie scattered up and down his writings, are all based on the Jewish, more particularly, the Mosaic viewpoint.

One reason for the lack of consistency in his writings, other than the impossibility of his task, is that he himself deals with Biblical material in different ways. Recalling that Philo really lived a double life, we are not surprised that the interpretations of his maturer years differed from those of his earliest writings. Hence, it becomes more difficult to understand the man. The problem would be less difficult, of course, if we could place the various treatises in the proper periods of his life. Then, at least, we could come to some sort of conclusion as to how his views developed and what could be regarded as an established conviction. But since, as Bentwich remarks, "the chronology of Philo's writings is as uncertain as the chronology of his life,"[28] we shall probably never know how to interpret the man on some points.

Another reason for his inconsistency in dealing with Biblical material is that different treatments were meant for

---

27. Eduard Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, p. 264.

28. Op. cit., p. 77.

different audiences. In general, Philo defends his religion especially against three classes of opponents. First of all, he inveighs against the scoffers among the Jews themselves, those who have deserted their Jewish faith. Next, a great part of his writing is directed toward those within Judaism who were coming to admire Chaldean astrology and who were inclining towards Greek culture. A third portion of his writings is meant for the ordinary heathen, particularly, the Egyptians with their animal-worship.[29] Throughout his writings Philo maintains a dignified attitude, and he very rarely mentions his opponents' names. His language, too, is elevated and mannerly.

---

29. Ewald, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 200ff.

II

Doctrine of God

In studying Philo's doctrine of God, we notice especially two points from which he proceeds, namely, the existence of God and the nature of God. Concerning the first point, Philo is deeply imbued with the conviction that God exists. To a devout Jew this could not be otherwise, for the sacred Scriptures establish this fact. And yet, for the sake of the heathen, Philo relies on philosophical arguments to prove God's existence. In the case of God's nature he is, for the most part, content to rely on the teachings of Moses.

In Philo's day there were many theories concerning the existence of God. There were skeptics who doubted God's existence, atheists who said there was no God at all, polytheists who believed that many gods existed, pantheists who believed God to be manifested in every object. Over against these divergent theories Philo introduced the God of Judaism, and he tries to prove His existence by rational arguments.[1]

In a general way, says Philo, the true God may be known by contemplating nature. He uses the analogy of microcosm and macrocosm, showing that God is in the universe in the same way that the invisible mind is in man. Even as the mind rules all the parts of the body, so all the parts of the cosmos must be ruled by a Supreme Being. Secondly, the existence of God may be proved by the intuitions of the soul. For example,

---

1. See his treatise, On the Creation

when we contemplate art or painting, we cannot do so without believing that someone created that piece of art or did that painting. So, too, in the cosmos. The multitudinous phenomena which we see and experience must be the work of a Creator. Another argument is that of causality. Just as any work of art cannot come about by itself, neither can we suppose that the universe evolved by itself. On the contrary, there must have been a first cause, something which gave shape and form to shapeless matter. Furthermore, the orderly arrangement in the universe suggests some law or reason acting upon it. As a result, Philo attributes this cause to mind.[2] The Supreme Mind is the original cause of the universe.

But there is a higher mode by which God may be apprehended. While ordinary men must be content with the knowledge of God gained indirectly, the more perfect and purified minds can apprehend Him through more direct manifestations.[3] "Those who strove to see God from the creation were confined to conjecture; but those pursued the truth who perceived God by means of God, light by means of light."[4] This idea is expressed through an allegory of Abraham. When Scripture says that Abraham left his country, and his kindred and his father's house,[5] this, according to Philo, means that he put off the body, sensible perception, and speech, so that only when the bodily things

---

2. νοῦς

3. This distinction between superior and inferior minds will be discussed under the doctrine of man.

4. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 5.

5. Genesis 12, 1ff.

were cast aside did God appear to him.[6] In other words, the higher life, the life that is removed from the busy world to solitude and retirement and has conquered the senses -- that is the life that attains to a more direct knowledge of God. In this doctrine that the highest intuition, the spiritual intuition, is capable of seeing God, we have Philo's mysticism. According to his doctrine, the goal of the righteous man is to arrive at this vision of God, and, having done that, to enjoy the communion with the Divine. Thus, Philo based his belief in the existence of God on the apparent orderly arrangement in the universe, upon the evidences of causality in the cosmos, and upon spiritual intuitions. These three, says Philo, prove that God exists and that He is independent of everything else.

However, of more importance is Philo's teaching concerning the nature of God. That God exists is an unquestioned fact. But matters are not so simple when it comes to learning who God is, for here there is room for much speculation. Now, if any certain conclusion can be drawn from Philo's system, it is this that God is a transcendent God. He is entirely separate from man and the world, incapable of coming into contact with anything finite. In this respect, he agrees with Old Testament theology, which speaks of God's wisdom transcending the world,[7] and of man's inability to behold God.[8]

---

6. Cf. On the Migration of Abraham.
7. Isaiah 55, 9.
8. Exodus 33, 20.

In keeping with this lofty conception, Philo regards God as transcending all description. Simply because He is so elevated above the world, and because we thus are unable to know Him, nothing positive can be said of Him. That which is begotten cannot comprehend that which is unbegotten. Thus, appealing to Exodus 3, 14 (LXX), Philo calls God τὸ ὄν. God's nature is inexpressible by any name, for, Philo points out, God refers to Himself as "I am that I am".[9] Hence, we know only that He is and not what He is. We know him only negatively and not positively, because all those names by which we, in human speech, are accustomed to call Him are only predicates which contrast his infinite Being with the finite characteristics of the world. While God's creatures are definitely related to Him, He is in no way related to them. He alone is self-sufficient, transcendent, changeless, eternal, without quality.

The point from which Philo proceeds is the antithesis of God and the world, the Infinite and the finite. For this reason Philo makes an effort to explain away the anthropomorphic and anthropopathic statements concerning God in the Old Testament. He regarded it as impious to speak of God as having any of the characteristics of a created being. According to Philo, such terms are used only for the accommodation of those who are unable to understand. Not everyone has the same gift of thought and the ability to interpret. Thus, for our benefit, Scripture has pictured God in such terms so that we

---

9. Exodus 3, 14.

may know of his existence. Furthermore, human language itself is inadequate to express the true conception of God. To these ideas Philo gives expression in the following passage:

> "God being uncreated and the Author of the creation of the others needs none of the properties which belong to the creatures which He has brought into being. For consider, if He uses our bodily parts or organs He has feet to move from one place to another. But whither will He go or walk since His presence fills everything? To whom will He go, when none is His equal? And for what purpose will He walk? For it cannot be out of care for health as it is with us. Hands He must have to receive and give. Yet He receives nothing from anyone, for, besides that He has no needs, all things are His possessions, and when He gives, He employs as minister of His gifts the Reason wherewith also He made the world. Nor did He need eyes, which have no power of perception without the light which meets our sense. But that light is created, whereas God saw before creation, being Himself His own light. Why need we speak of the organs of nourishment? If He has them, He eats and is filled, rests awhile and after the rest has need again, and the accompaniments of this I will not dwell upon. These are the mythical fictions of the impious, who, professing to represent the deity as of human form, in reality represent Him as having human passions.
>
> "Why then does Moses speak of feet and hands, goings in and goings out in connexion with the Uncreated, or of His arming to defend Himself against His enemies? For he describes Him as bearing a sword, and using as His weapons minds and death-dealing fire (thunderbolt and storm blast the poets call them, using different words, and say they are the weapons of the Cause). Why again does he speak of His jealousy, His wrath, His moods of anger, and the other emotions similar to them, which he describes in terms of human nature? But to those who ask these questions Moses answers thus: 'Sirs, the lawgiver who aims at the best must have one end only before him - to benefit all whom his work reaches. Those to whose lot has fallen a generously gifted nature and a training blameless throughout, and who thus find that their later course through life lies in a straight and even highway, have truth for their fellow-traveller, and being admitted by her into the infallible mysteries of the Existent do not overlay the conception of God with any of the attributes of created being. These find a moral most pertinent in the oracles of revelation, that 'God is not as a

> man' nor yet is He as the heaven or as the universe. These last are forms of a particular kind which present themselves to our senses. But He is not apprehensible even by the mind, save in the fact that He is. For it is His existence which we apprehend, and of what lies outside that existence nothing. But they whose natural wit is more dense and dull, or whose early training has been mishandled, since they have no power of clear vision, need physicians in the shape of admonishers, who will devise the treatment proper to their present condition. Thus ill-disciplined and foolish slaves receive profit from a master who frightens them, for they fear his threats and menaces and thus involuntarily are schooled by fear. All such may well learn the untruth, which will benefit them, if they cannot be brought to wisdom by truth."[10]

It is clear that Philo regarded God as incapable of being comprehended. The best we can do is to think of Him as being, entirely free from all quality or limitations, or as Philo puts it:

> "Nothing that can give assurance can give positive assurance touching God, for to none has He shown His nature, but He has rendered it invisible to our whole race. Who can assert of the First Cause either that It is without body or that It is a body, that It is of such a kind or that It is of no kind? In a word who can make any positive assertion concerning His essence or quality or state or movement?"[11]

Yet Philo did not rob God of personality. On the contrary, he regarded God as a personal God, the divine, self-determining Mind. This he asserts in the words:

> "Moses, both because he had attained the very summit of philosophy, and because he had been divinely instructed in the greater and most essential part of Nature's lore, could not fail to recognize that the universal must consist of two parts, one part active Cause and the other passive object; and that the

---

10. On the Unchangeableness of God, 56-64.
11. Allegorical Interpretation, III, 206.

> active Cause is the perfectly pure and unsullied Mind of the universe, transcending virtue, transcending knowledge, transcending the good itself and the beautiful itself; while the passive part is in itself incapable of life and motion, but, when set in motion and shaped and quickened by Mind, changes into the most perfect masterpiece, namely this world."[12]

As the rational Cause, God is in distinct antithesis to creation. Moreover, He exercises a continual causality, forever holding the world together and preventing it from disintegrating and vanishing. But our best efforts in searching for God will be rewarded only in being able "to comprehend that God in his essential being is absolutely incomprehensible, and to see that He is not to be seen".[13]

One of these negative predicates by which God is described is His namelessness. Since the essence of the Divine Being is unknown, therefore, God is without a name, at least as far as we human beings are concerned. To prove this doctrine, Philo appeals to the incident in Scripture where God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and called Himself, "I am that I am". This suggests to Philo that God is without a proper name, and is referred to merely as being. No name is to be applied to Him who is infinite. Names are characteristic of finite and created things only.[14] If we do call God by some particular name, it is only because our minds are imperfect and we need

---

12. On the Creation, 8-9.
13. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 20.
14. On the Life of Moses, I, 74-76.

some mode or way of referring to him. Yet no single name exhausts or describes the essence of God.

Still on the negative side, we notice, in the next place, that God is without qualities.[15] No description can be applied to Him because He transcends all qualities, because "he is above them, owing nothing to them, but being himself the living source from which they emanate."[16] According to Philo, if we ascribe qualities to God we immediately place him in a class, to which others may belong. This would be entirely unworthy of God. Thus, the best we can do is to regard him as without qualities, a self-existent Being whose essence is absolutely sui generis. This idea Philo expresses in the following passage:

> "For not even the whole world would be a place fit for God to make His abode, since God is His own place, and He is filled by Himself, and sufficient for Himself, filling and containing all other things in their destitution and barrenness and emptiness, but Himself contained by nothing else, seeing that He is Himself One and the Whole."[17]

This complete transcendence of God Philo speaks of in another passage, in which he indicates that, though we may know of God's existence, it is impossible to know His essence.

> "Yet the vision [of God, gained by the righteous man] only showed that He is, not what He is. For this which is better than the good, more venerable than the monad, purer than the unit, cannot be discerned by anyone else; to God alone is it permitted to apprehend God."[18]

---

15. ἄποιος
16. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 24.
17. Allegorical Interpretation, I, 44.
18. On Rewards and Punishments, 39-40.

Thus God is superior to all description, for everything that is good and perfect and blessed is comprehended in God, but is only a part of His full essence.

Now with such a lofty conception of God it might be expected that Philo would stop at this point and be content with the incomprehensibility of God. On the contrary, he is not satisfied with purely negative conceptions, but freely ascribes positive descriptions to the self-existent Being. In this apparent contradiction critics of Philo have revelled. They have pointed out that this is an instance of glaring inconsistency, for, on the one hand, Philo denies all attributes to God, and, on the other, he ascribes attributes to Him. The difficulty, no doubt, arose from Philo's attempt to solve rationally the problems of transcendence and immanence. Philo has no doubt about the transcendence of God, and he was equally convinced that God acts upon the world. The latter implies positive properties. For Philo or, for that matter, for anyone who tries with human reason to find a solution to a problem containing two such irreconcilable elements, the difficulty is obvious. Philo's whole Logos doctrine is an attempt to reconcile these opposites, an attempt to link the infinite with the finite. Thus, to explain the immanence of God, it was necessary to presuppose positive properties. We use the word "properties" advisedly, for Philo makes the distinction between qualities and properties. While God can be regarded as having only negative qualities, He does have positive properties.[19] If

---

19. Cf. Allegorical Interpretation, II, 79ff.

there is any essential difference between the two outside the sphere of philosophy, we are not aware of it. But Philo was, after all, a philosopher, and we will have to try to observe his distinction.

Accordingly, then, Philo ascribes eternity to God. Since God is the cause and the mind of the universe, He must be eternal, for if He were not eternal, He could not be the first cause and the source of all things. This eternity of God is expressed in the following passage:

> "Who then is he that sows in them the good seed save the Father of all, that is God unbegotten and begotten of all things."[20]

All other things have come into being by creation, but God alone is without beginning and the Father of all. In this respect He is different from everything else. Furthermore, since creation implies change, God, who is uncreated, is necessarily unchangeable and, consequently, incorruptible. This incorruptibility, together with the unity of God, is expressed thus:

> "God is alone, a Unity, in the sense that His nature is simple not composite, whereas each one of us and of all other created beings is made up of many things. I, for example, am many things in one. I am soul and body. To soul belong rational and irrational parts, and to body, again, different properties, warm and cold, heavy and light, dry and moist. But God is not a composite Being, consisting of many parts, nor is He mixed with aught else. For whatever is added to God, is either superior or inferior or equal to Him. But there is nothing equal or superior to God. And no lesser thing is resolved into Him. If He do so assimilate any lesser thing, He also will be lessened. And if He can be made less, He will also be capable of corruption; and even to imagine this were

---

20. On the Cherubim, 44

> blasphemous. The "one" and the "monad" are, therefore, the only standard for determining the category to which God belongs. Rather should we say, the One God is the sole standard for the "monad". For, like time, all number is subsequent to the universe; and God is prior to the universe, and is its Maker."[21]

Other attributes or properties upon which we need not elaborate, and which we should expect to be included in Philo's lofty conception of God are His invisibility,[22] His omnipresence,[23] His transcending space and time,[24] His omniscience,[25] His omnipotence,[26] His complete perfection.[27]

To one particular attribute, however, some attention must be given, namely, God's goodness, for this brings us to matters concerning creation and providence. In connection with God's goodness we find Philo's answer to the reason for creation and providence. This is expressly stated in his treatise On the Cherubim:

> "For to bring anything into being needs all these conjointly, the "by which", the "from which", the "through which", the "for which", and the first of these is the cause, the second the material, the third the tool or instrument, and the fourth the end or object. If we ask what combination is always needed that a house or city should be built, the answer is a builder, stones or timber, and instruments. What is the builder but the cause "by which"? What are the stones and timber but the material "from which"? What are the instruments but the means "through which"? And what is the end or object of the building but shelter and safety, and this constitutes the "for which". Let us leave these merely particular buildings, and contemplate

---

21. Allegorical Interpretation, II, 2-3.
22. On Abraham, 76.
23. On the Confusion of Tongues, 134-139.
24. Who is the Heir of Divine Things, 227-229.
25. On the Unchangeableness of God, 8-9.
26. On the Creation, 46.
27. On the Cherubim, 85-86.

> that greatest of houses or cities, this universe. We shall see that its cause is God, by whom it has come into being, its material the four elements, from which it was compounded, its instrument the word of God, through which it was framed, and the final cause of the building is the goodness of the architect. It is thus that truth-lovers distinguish, who desire true and sound knowledge."[28]

God, according to Philo, created the world because He is good and kind, and for the same reason He exercises providence over the world. Using the analogy of the provisions that parents make for their children, Philo describes God as dealing bountifully with His creatures.[29] His blessings are showered down upon both the good and the evil. In fact, so numerous are the blessings flowing from God's goodness that the world cannot contain them. Not only are His punishments intolerable, but even His blessings are so abundant that not even the whole world could hold them, should God wish to manifest all of them. For that reason, He says, the Israelites said to Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."[30] His conclusion is that the status of the universe is measured in direct proportion to God's bestowing or withholding His blessings.[31]

But if God is so good in exercising divine providence, how do we account for the evil in the world? How is it possible that evil should even exist in a world that owes its creation

---

28. On the Cherubim, 125-127. Here Philo shows his acquaintance with Aristotelian causality.

29. Cf. On the Creation, 171-172.

30. Exodus 20, 19.

31. On Dreams, 143.

and providence to the goodness of God? Why is there pain, pestilence, and calamities of all kinds? Furthermore, why is it that these misfortunes appear to be unequally distributed, those who deserve them often escaping them and the righteous ones often having more than their share? These questions are answered in Philo's two treatises On Providence, in which he pursues philosophical arguments and does not attempt to answer such questions on the basis of Scripture and exegetical writing.[32] As to the cause of evil, Philo is convinced that God has nothing to do with it. He uses numerous human analogies to show that evil is something which exists outside of God and cannot be attributed to Him, for a transcendent, perfect, beneficent God cannot be mentioned in the same breath with evil.

And yet by philosophic argument he tries to show that all evil is not unnecessary. On the principle that some evil is required to insure the harmonious functioning of the entire cosmos, he offers many illustrations in which evil is at once a misfortune for some and a blessing for others. Thus, the principle of God's goodness is not violated or contradicted, but His ways are justified. Incidentally, this very point gives us a good insight into Philo's eclectic tendencies. Unable to solve the mysteries of God's hidden ways from the writings of Judaism, he turns to philosophic speculation. All this is quite consistent with his attempt to harmonize Jewish theology and Greek philosophy.

---

32. Cf. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 58.

This, in broad outline, is Philo's conception of God. Throughout, he has in mind a God who is transcendent above everything in the universe. Nothing finite can describe Him or apprehend Him. The Infinite is simply too far above the finite. In this respect Philo's conception is Jewish. But he was also impressed by the apparent connection between God and the world. The universe seemed to hinge on the presence of a divine power working in it. All the phenomena of nature seemed to shout this to him. God must in some way be connected with the world. Yet transcendence and immanence are terms which defy human reconciliation. Undoubtedly, Philo must have realized the difficulty. Accordingly, to supply the rational need for an intermediate link, Philo introduced his doctrine of the Logos. The Logos was the instrument through which God descended to man and through which man ascended to God. It is the fundamental doctrine of Philo's system, not only because for him it solved a great difficulty, but also because it commended Jewish monotheism to the Greeks.

III

Doctrine of the Logos

The doctrine of the Logos reached its fullest development in Philo. To be sure, this endeavor to bridge the chasm between God and the world was not original with Philo. As long as the world has existed, man has been concerned about his relations to God and about God's mode of dealing with mankind. This innate feeling of dependence upon the Supreme Being and a conscious speculation about His activity in the world has been a matter of supreme importance to every thoughtful human being. Nor was the formal doctrine of the Logos an original concept with Philo. It is true, no one before Philo had discussed it so thoroughly nor had attached so much importance to it, but the idea itself, including the very name, had already had an historical development before Philo appeared on the scene. The roots of this concept had been planted centuries before, so that the idea had already attained formidable proportions by the time Philo began to nourish it. In his hands it developed and matured and reached its highest growth. It remained for Christianity to reveal the full, supreme significance of the Logos.

These Logos roots, planted already five centuries before Philo's time were embedded in Greek soil. Greek thinkers cultivated them and gradually the Logos flower began to emerge. Thus, by the time Philo appeared, he took up a concept that was not original with him, but whose terminology and philosophical form had long been influenced by Greek thought.

Philo, however, succeeded in bringing out more of its color by shedding a religious light upon it. The Logos of the Greeks had been thoroughly pagan. Although by no means bringing out the true meaning of the Logos, as John in his Gospel has done, Philo re-interpreted this pagan, philosophical Logos of the Greeks by attaching a religious significance to it. Through the ingenuity of Philo, the Greek Logos was united with Hebrew monotheism. Again, we are face to face with the motivating purpose in Philo's mind. His object was, not to introduce a new system, but to effect a union between two existing systems -- Greek philosophy and Jewish theology, He apparently made no conscious attempt to be original. On the contrary, he was an eclectic. His theology was Jewish, his philosophy a mere reproduction of what he considered best for his purpose from various existing systems. Thus, to appreciate his own concept, it will be instructive to review briefly certain phases of Greek philosophy which Philo found useful in establishing his Logos doctrine. It will be well also to keep in mind that we are now dealing with the philosophical Logos. Strictly speaking, there is no evolution of the Logos idea as we Christians know and believe it. When John speaks of the Logos as the Son of God made incarnate, he is speaking of a divine revelation, which is far removed from the philosophical Logos idea. And so, when we speak of the development or of the primitive traces of a Logos concept, it is the development of the philosophical Logos or of the use of the term, to which we are referring. This, indeed, had a

development.

Heraclitus, the Ephesian, who flourished about 500 B.C., was one of the first to introduce a more or less formal Logos doctrine. He was, by and large, a pantheist, and we are not surprised that the first traces of the Logos assumed the nature of a cosmical power. This philosopher's premise is that all things are in a state of constant flow and change, so that not a single object is the same for two successive moments.[1] By logical deduction he arrived at the conclusion that fire must be the primitive substance, because fire is the most changeable of all the elements. All things are derived from fire. Fire changes into water, and of water half changes into earth, while the other half returns to the original substance, fire. Thus, all the elements are in a constant state of change.

However, all this change in the universe proceeds according to a fixed law, which is none other than cosmical reason or the Logos. All things happen according to this Logos. Whether Heraclitus ascribed a conscious intelligence to the universe is a matter of conjecture. He seems to recognize an immanent reason in the world, but we cannot prove that the Logos of Heraclitus had a conscious intelligence.[2] Apparently, he recognizes only a rational law pervading the universe.

In another sense, the Logos is really fire spiritualized, while the material element is fire itself. Now, of the substance

---

1. Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, p. 46
2. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 39.

of this Logos, this spiritualized fire, the human soul is a portion.[3] The soul is not separated in each individual life, but is in a state of change like everything else. Actually the soul is material, for it consists of fire, being of the same nature as the universal principle. Heraclitus calls it an "exhalation" of the universal principle, the fire which ascends upwards out of the moist elements of the world. Here his pantheism is evident. Heraclitus compared the Logos in the universe to human reason in the individual. In the former it was objective, unconscious reason, in the latter, subjective, conscious intelligence. Thus, says Drummond, he avoided the terms νοῦς and φρήν because they implied subjective knowledge, while in the Logos, this idea is not necessarily included.[4]

It is also apparent that with Heraclitus the Logos has no relation to the "Word". His is a materialistic Logos, a cosmical power, so that there is no transcendent God whose word it could be. It is the universal reason in opposition to the individual thought, "the rational self-evolution of the world."[5] The relation is rather that of the whole to the parts, since the parts are manifestations of the whole (the Logos).

This, then, is one of the earliest and one of the more prominent usages of the Logos concept. In his speculations, Heraclitus arrived at a cosmical power in the universe analagous to human reason in the individual and this rational

---

3. Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, p. 47
4. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. I., p. 47.
5. Ibid, p. 46.

law he termed Logos. Thus, Heraclitus is credited with giving the first important impulse to this concept, which was gradually to be taken up and developed further by those who succeeded him.

The first to make an advance in this newly found Logos concept was Anaxagoras, who was born about 500 B.C. He also claimed a primitive substance existed, but unlike his predecessors, he said it was unlimited in quality and number. To show how this unlimited primitive substance got into motion and order, Anaxagoras formed his doctrine of the "mind". He uses the word νοῦς (mind) instead of λόγος (reason).[6] "Mind" was separated from all other substance and ruled over all things, yet it is not clear whether it is immaterial or material. Since it brought everything into orderly arrangement, it also possessed universal knowledge. However, Anaxagoras never attributed personal existence to mind. It was in some things but not in all things; it is a substance present in larger or smaller quantities in various objects.

Anaxagoras' principal object was to explain the material world, and the idea of "mind" was introduced rather as a convenience. He was concerned chiefly with material phenomena, and his only purpose in using the doctrine of mind (νοῦς) was to explain the original motion of the primitive substance, which then spread in wider circles. This gave rise to a force which, under mechanical laws, separated the universe into ether and air. By collection or separation these formed the water,

---

6. Ibid, p. 48.

earth, stones, and, finally, the sun and stars. Since mind is divisible and exists in smaller or larger proportions in various objects, it also exists in all living things. It is virtually identified with the soul or the vital principle. This pantheism reaches its extreme when Anaxagoras says that even the plants have their share of mind. Evidently, the human soul was a part of, and of the same substance as, the universal mind. Whether it retained its individual being when separated from the body, or was reabsorbed in the cosmical mind, is not determined.

Thus, by the introduction of the term "mind", the Logos doctrine was advanced to a certain degree. Under Anaxagoras it still had all the characteristics of a vague, cosmical force in the universe, yet by ascribing universal knowledge to "mind", a distinct advance was made from the Logos of Heraclitus, which did not have this attribute, but was rather a mere rational law.

At this point we might mention in passing the name of Socrates. His system contains no doctrine of the Logos, but it does contain some things that are related to it. Having conceived of teleology, or design and purpose in the universe, Socrates dwells on the personal relations between the divine and the human. He believed in the personality of one supreme and universal God, under whom there were also a number of inferior and local subordinate deities, but he also believed that the universal mind could become divisible and could separate into individual human souls, all the while retaining

all the qualities of mind. Thus, the human soul partakes of the divine substance and is capable of knowing God or the gods. This was Socrates' chief mode of approach to the divine. As far as the Logos doctrine is concerned, Socrates added nothing new, yet his attempt to bring the human and the divine into relation with each other has some significance, for it showed that Greek philosophy was beginning to consider spiritual things in addition to material phenomena.

The next Greek philosopher with whom we have to do deserves more than passing interest in this present discussion. We refer to Plato. His philosophy actually contains no doctrine of the Logos, yet some of his doctrines have contributed to the Alexandrian conception of the Logos.

The basis of the Platonic system is the doctrine of "ideas",[7] and a knowledge of this doctrine is essential to the understanding of Philo. According to Plato, "ideas" are eternal, unchangeable realities, constituting the world of real existence, apprehended only by the reason (νοῦς). In the world of senses there is no real being, only shifting phenomena. Real knowledge can be found only by arriving at general notions, which are reality. Thus, each visible object is merely an imperfect pattern of the general idea. The ideas are not subject to space. Yet they are neither divine thoughts, but real substances. Plato believed that these ideas existed in indefinite multitude, because there is an idea corresponding to every general notion that we are capable of forming. He also speaks of a hierarchy

---

7. Cf. Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, pp. 129ff.

of ideas, of which the highest is that of good (ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα).[8] The latter he sometimes identifies with God, so that "the good" is "the creator and Father of the universe."

In the relation of the eternal to the phenomenal, Plato approaches most nearly to the doctrine of the Logos. The basis for the creation of the cosmos is the goodness of the creator, who wished everything else to be good.[9] Now, since nothing is good without mind, and since mind cannot be separated from soul, the creator placed mind in the soul and soul in the body. This is his doctrine of the cosmical soul. The cosmos was due to the forethought of God, and apparently was also a living being endowed with soul and mind. Since the universe was a living being, penetrated in all its parts with a rational soul, this soul was the mediating term between the ideal and the material, the eternal and the phenomenal. Like the ideas, it was incorporeal, like material objects it had come into being. It existed in space and was capable of motion. The cosmical soul was the regulating and harmonizing principle in the world. Again, we have the relation between the microcosm and the macrocosm, for according to Plato, just as our bodies were fashioned after the great body of the universe, so the individual soul proceeded from the world's more perfect soul. The souls were of the same material as the soul of the universe, only with diminished purity. Divine in origin and nature, pre-existent and immortal, the soul formed the link between the

---

8. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 59.

9. Note the resemblance between Philo and Plato on this point (cf. p. 33).

ideal and the phenomenal worlds.

This gives us a sketchy background for Plato's foreshadowing the Logos doctrine. Using the term "mind", he recognized the presence of an all-pervading reason in the universe. Moreover, in order to bridge the chasm between God and the world, he introduced his theory of the cosmical soul. This universal soul, different from, yet related to, the supreme God, was the connecting link between the eternal and the phenomenal world, and it is very similar to the later Alexandrian philosophy of the Logos. Like the philosophical Logos, the soul is present everywhere in nature, yet with Plato "the soul is far more exclusively connected with the material universe than is the Logos of Philo."[10] It will later become apparent that Plato and Philo agree in many things. Philo was indebted to Plato in a great measure both as to thought and terminology. Had Philo been a Greek and not a Jew, he might have been Plato's successor.

Yet of all the schools of Greek thought, the Stoics most fully developed a doctrine of the Logos. They were not so much interested in speculation about the mysteries of nature, but were more concerned with practical, religious questions. The most eminent Stoic, perhaps, was Chrysippus, but only fragments of his writings remain, so that we are indebted to the later Stoic writers for our knowledge of this system.

The fundamentals of Stoic thought are materialism and pantheism. Their celebrated teaching that man should live in

---

10. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 68.

conformity with nature is well known. Yet their doctrine of the Logos is significant for its contribution to Alexandrian theology. The Stoics by various philosophical arguments concluded that there was reason or wisdom in the universe. All the orderly movements and the unchangeable constancy in the universe proved a controlling reason. Indeed, the universe itself, they believed, produces this, and, hence, they identified the universe with God. For the Stoics such terms as the universe, divine reason, supreme cause or Logos were all synonymous. Divine reason or the Logos is not detached from, but is the universe itself. Their materialism becomes apparent when they thus leave no further room for a higher power transcending the material world. With them the ultimate is material causality, and the obvious conclusion is that God is a material substance and the Logos a corporeal spirit."[11] Following Heraclitus, they attach great importance to fire. God or nature was fire, and all other elements resulted by chemical change from fire. Thus, we arrive at a sort of fire-Logos, a mixture of physical and religious speculation. But the Stoics seem to deviate somewhat from this principle when they speak of God also as a spirit. Air or breath was coordinate with fire, and both had pervading tendencies. Air is said to permeate all things. Since these terms were applied to God or the Logos who pervaded and permeated matter, including "ditches and worms and workers of infamy",[12] we are

---

11. Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, p.215
12. Quoted in Drummond, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 87.

confronted with an all-pervading Logos, which controls the administration of the universe. According to its various functions in the economy of the world, it is variously called Destiny, Truth, Fate, Cause, Nature, Providence, Universe, Necessity, etc. There is nothing better than the universe, hence, it had reason and was God. In another respect God is nature, since, the Stoics believed, creation and providence are due to nature. Furthermore, since everything is supposed to happen according to destiny or natural causation, God is spoken of as destiny. And so on. The result is that "at every turn we are brought back to the all-penetrating Logos".[13] Being extreme moralists, the Stoics also found the cause for both good and evil to reside in nature or the universe or the Logos, etc.

But there is another aspect of the Stoical Logos besides its all-pervading, materialistic and pantheistic aspect, and that is the doctrine of the "seminal Logos" (λόγος σπερματικός). It is really a theory of evolution. The universe is regarded as an organism which unfolded from a seed, in which all earthly and heavenly things were wrapped up and were produced at determined times. This does not contradict the other explanation of causality, for the primeval fire was regarded as the seed. Since the fire is both reason (as explained above) and seed, we have the combined expression -- seminal reason. This seminal Logos is God Himself, the organic principle of the universe. At this point we are introduced to the logoi, a term and a concept

---

13. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 94.

which Philo adopts literally. Just as the universe evolved from the seminal Logos, so the various organic bodies within the cosmos also had their seminal logoi, which were included within the Logos of the universe, and as a totality either proceeded from, or merged into, the universal Logos. Thus, the pristine fire, like a seed, contained the logoi and causes of all things, past, present, and future, the latter being united in the universal Logos. Into this seminal Logos return the souls of the dead.

As far as the relation of the Logos to the human soul is concerned, the Stoics taught that man is a portion of the universal reason, which, having become detached from itself, constitutes man's personality. In other words, the soul, mind, or reason was God, dwelling as a guest within the human body.[14] Thus, both God and man participated in the Logos. Without pausing to follow their reasoning, we shall proceed to the division of the soul in man, and notice that the Stoics separated the soul into eight parts -- the rational or intellectual faculty, the faculties of speech and reproduction, and the five senses. Of these, speech appeared to be in closest connection with the rational faculty, since the voice converts the thoughts of the soul into sound. Thus, the so-called two-fold Logos in man originated -- the internal Logos (λόγος ἐνδιάθετος) and the uttered Logos (λόγος προφορικός). The latter is the correlative of the internal Logos.[15]

---

14. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 108.
15. Ibid, Vol. I, p. 110.

These are the more obvious contributions of the Stoical Logos to Alexandrian theology. It was a Logos that manifested itself under various aspects, many of them contradictory and unreal, all purely philosophical and materialistic. Indeed, the whole development of the Logos concept in the hands of Greek philosophy is pagan. Their problem was to bring the human into relation with the divine, a problem which human speculation can never solve. Since, therefore, their approach to the problem was materialistic, a materialistic and unsatisfactory solution was inevitable. Only divine revelation could solve the mystery. This was foolishness to the Greeks.

In developing his Logos doctrine, Philo was influenced largely by this Greek speculation. This is not surprising, if we keep in mind his purpose of harmonizing Jewish and Greek thought. But Philo also was influenced by Judaism. He was an orthodox Jew, and had all the background of the Old Testament.

Thus, the Old Testament, too, contributed to the formulation of the Jewish-Alexandrian philosophy of which Philo was the most distinguished exponent. In the Old Testament we find certain roots of the Logos concept. There are various terms and concepts in the Old Testament which anticipate the Logos of later times. The Jews of Old Testament times were characterized by their strict monotheism. Jehovah was the only true God. Most important of all, he was transcendent. Yet equally fundamental was the Old Testament truth that God speaks to the human soul and projects Himself into the affairs of nature and men. In Alexandrian philosophy we are aware of a

philosophical explanation of these two opposing thoughts -- God's transcendence and His immanence. Jewish philosophers attempted to reconcile the two by introducing mediating powers. But in the Old Testament the Jewish religionist rested on his faith in Jehovah and sought not so much a theory of God's relations to nature, but tried to explain the manner in which God takes part in the affairs of men. These descriptions contributed to the later doctrine of the Logos in Philo, for, as we have already remarked, Philo approached his task with pre-conceived notions, which were the result of his Jewish faith.

In viewing the concepts under which God is represented as active in the world we must keep in mind that there is in the Old Testament much poetical personification. Wisdom, for instance, is one of the terms used to denote God's active agency in the world, as is also the "Word".[16] The latter term contributed much to later Alexandrian theology. The LXX translation uses the word λόγος. Apparently the ideas of Spirit, Breath and Word are closely related, and it may be that the Jew conceived of the latter as "the articulate shape or expression of the former".[17] They are not God Himself, but powers which He sends forth. With Him, to speak is to create.[18] Here we have a theory of God's relation to the universe and of the manner in which He communicates with it, although it

---

16. Cf. Isaiah 2,1; Ps. 33,6; 147,18; 148,8; cf. also Genesis 1, "And God said."

17. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 137.

18. Cf. Ps. 33, 9.

cannot be shown that the idea of mediation is implied.

But the "Word of the Lord" was not only an agency employed in creation. It also became a name for the revelation of Jehovah in the hearts of men.[19] Numerous passages show that the "Word" was regarded in this sense.[20]

Now, while it is significant that the finite and the infinite are united with each other by means of the "Word", the latter expression is probably related to Alexandrian theology more closely in language than in thought. We cannot prove from the passages cited that the "Word" is a distinct hypostasis, and in this respect it differs from the later idea of the Logos.

Yet when we introduce the concept of Wisdom into the discussion, a new light is cast. The "Word" suggests, primarily, the power of God in creation and in providence. But we take a step farther, when we notice that goodness, intelligence, mercy and understanding are other aspects of His relations with men. All these qualities meet in the attribute of Wisdom.[21] According to Jewish interpretation, Wisdom appears to become "an agent of God in the accomplishment of His gracious will and purpose."[22] In the book of Proverbs, Wisdom is personified, and some of the leading

---

19. George Stevens, The Theology of the New Testament, p.577

20. Cf. I Sam. 3,21; Is. 2,1; Ezek. 3,16; 6,1; Jer. 1,2; etc. In all these passages the LXX has

21. Cf. Ps. 147,5; 145,9; 104,24.

22. Stevens, op. cit., p. 577.

ideas of the doctrine of the Logos are apparent.[23] On the one hand, Wisdom denotes all that is good in God, on the other, Wisdom may be apprehended by men. In the book of Job, too, Wisdom, while not personified, is described as a distinct entity that is apprehended by men.[24]

In general, however, these expressions are poetical personifications which describe God's activities of power and grace in the world. They do not indicate that the writers looked upon Wisdom as a distinct being possessing divine attributes. The absence of personification in Job seems to prove this. Yet here was an important truth in Jewish faith, for Wisdom was the principle of unity in God and man. This apparently satisfied the Jewish soul.

However, not only did the Old Testament provide elements useful in formulating the later doctrine of the Logos. The Old Testament apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings also made definite contributions along the same lines. Traces of Philo's Logos can be found in these extra-canonical writings. In the Wisdom of Solomon, for example, we have the origin and nature of wisdom described.[25] Wisdom is God's assistant, sent out to do His bidding, She shares in the divine counsels because of her intimate association with God.[26] In other words, Wisdom is an "instrumental agency". This, we shall see later,

---

23. Cf. Proverbs 3,13-26; 4,5-13; 7,4; 8,1-9,12.
24. Cf. Job 28, 12ff.
25. Cf. Ch. 7,10; 7,22-24; 7,25-29.
26. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 220.

is in perfect agreement with Philo's view that Wisdom, or the Logos, is an emanation of the divine essence, and plays a great part in directing the affairs of man. Whether it is only an attribute of God or is an independent being is not always clear. At any rate, this prepared the way for Philo's Logos. With Philo, the Logos is not that which is spoken (he avoids the term "uttered Logos"), but it is consistently an expression of reason, so that the conceptions associated with Wisdom are characteristic of the Logos, and the two are virtually identified. In Ecclesiasticus, too, we find Wisdom more or less personified. It is, for example, spoken of as "the first creation of God."[27]

In the Targums a similar signification is found in the use of the term "Memra". The reference is to the creative power evident in God's speaking (Gen. 1). It cannot be determined what the precise signification of Memra is. Some regard it as representing "the inmost union of purpose and will, and [as providing] a mode in which God could communicate Himself to His people, and at the same time sustain the universe",[28] while others look upon it as "a kind of intermediate agent between the transcendent Deity and the world."[29] Especially the anthropomorphic acts of God were ascribed to the Memra, through whom Jehovah expresses Himself and executes His will.

---

27. Cf. Ch. 1,4.10; 24,3-12; 24,32-33.
28. Joseph Carpenter, The Johannine Writings, p. 292.
29. Stevens, op. cit., p. 579.

This, then, is how the Logos doctrine developed within Judaism. It was the Jewish solution to the problem of God's activity in the world. Mediating powers were ascribed to the Word and to Wisdom, and their activity was the Jewish answer to the problem of how an infinite, transcendent God could be active in the finite world.

It is obvious that the conception of mediating powers had taken a strong hold on the minds of men in one form or another centuries before Philo addressed himself to the problem. The Greeks, with a view to explaining the relation of the Supreme Being, particularly, to nature, had arrived at a metaphysical principle, which, because of its own orderly activity and an apparent predetermined purpose motivating that activity, and, further, because reason and intelligence were its chief attributes, was referred to as the λόγος. Judaism, on the other hand, approaching the problem from a spiritual angle, by which it sought on the basis of faith to explain the communion between God and man, found the answer in Wisdom or in the Word of God, the uttered Logos. In philo these two streams of thought merge. Religion and philosophy are combined, as much as a combination is possible, and a harmony of the two is attempted, which, however, is as unreal as it was sincere.

All these preliminary speculations and interpretations on the part of Greeks and Jews establish the fact that the Logos concept occupied much of the thought of mankind already before Philo, so that this Jewish philosopher was by no means original in this respect. Yet he deserves a place in the history of

philosophy and religious thought, because, by combining two systems, he gave a new interpretation to the Logos doctrine. In Philo we find the culmination of that combination of Judaism and Hellenism. He brought the Logos doctrine to its highest development, that is, before Christianity revealed its true significance and obviated any further speculation.

Perhaps, the most direct approach to Philo's doctrine of the Logos would be to consider his theory of the divine powers, or logoi, which form a large part of Philo's system. Immediately we are confronted by many difficulties. Philo himself admits that human language about God is inadequate, and that figurative language must be employed.[30] Furthermore, Philo's style of writing is rhetorical, and this often obscures his meaning. Add to this his allegorical interpretation, and we see how extremely difficult it becomes to fathom his meaning or to establish definitely his position. Or, we may see the difficulty by again referring to Philo's task. The attempt to harmonize two opposing systems of thought -- the teachings of Moses and the speculations of Greek metaphysics - necessarily led to many confusions of language.

Philo's theory of creation manifests a dualism of God and the world.[31] Since, according to Philo, God formed the world out of pre-existing, shapeless matter, matter must be

---

30. See p. 16.

31. Cf. his treatise On the Creation

a second principle alongside of, although infinitely inferior to, God. Now, in order to explain the activity of God upon matter, Philo was led by sheer necessity to introduce his doctrine of the 'divine powers' (δυνάμεις). The difficulty into which he was placed, as a result, will be seen presently.

From the contemplation ofnature itself the human soul begins to inquire into the nature of cosmical forces, and soon perceives that there is some divine power or force regulating the world.[32] God is the Creator of the universe, and these forces belonging to Him bring Him into immediate connection with the world. They are "unifying powers",[33] because they bind and hold together all the parts of the universe, and prevent the universe from being dissolved into its parts. Both in the spheres of mind and of matter we are confronted by these powers, which give form and reality to the objects of nature. All these powers are efficient through God, who is the ultimate causality. Whenever we see two or more objects that can be distinguished, we are aware of the presence of powers, for it is the function of these powers to differentiate between the objects in the universe. In his own words we are told:

> "Again the torches of fire borne as in the mystic torch-rite are the judgments of God the torch-bearer, judgments bright and radiant, whose wont it is to range between the half-pieces, that is between the opposites of which the whole world is composed. For we read 'torches of fire which passed through

---

32. Cf. p. 23.

33. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 69.

> between the half-pieces.[34] Thus you may know how highly excellent is the work of the Potencies [δυναμέων] of God as they pass through the midst of material and immaterial things. They destroy nothing - for the half-pieces remain unharmed - but divide and distinguish the nature of each."[35]

Everything that we see in nature had an immaterial or ideal pattern, so that these powers or forces themselves are immaterial (ασώματοι).[36]

Moreover, these divine powers are said to be eternal, because they are connected with the eternal mind of God. Through their energy the ideal world was formed into the material, the intelligible into the perceptible. The former is the archetype of the latter. The world of ideas, then, are the powers themselves. Through them God became active in the universe.

The question now arises, Is there not some orderly arrangement to these innumerable powers? It is to be expected that some would take precedence over others, or that some would be dependent upon others. From a passage, in which Philo gives an allegorical interpretation of the cherubim placed at the gates of Paradise, we gain a clearer view of these powers.

> "The voice told me that while God is indeed one, His highest and chiefest powers are two, even goodness and sovereignty. Through His goodness He begat all that is, through His sovereignty He rules what He has begotten. And in the midst between the two there is a third which unites them, Reason, for it

---

34. Cf. Gen. 15, 17.

35. Who is the Heir of Divine Things, 311-312.

36. Cf. On the Life of Moses, II, 74.

> is through reason that God is both ruler and good. Of these two potencies sovereignty and goodness the Cherubim are symbols, as the fiery sword is the symbol of reason. For exceeding swift and burning heat is reason and chiefly so the reason of the (Great) Cause, for it alone preceded and outran all things, conceived before them all, manifest above them all."[37]

The two main powers - goodness and sovereignty - unite all the other powers, and these two in turn are united by the Logos. Using terms which are common in the LXX, Philo represents goodness as θεός and sovereignty as κύριος. From these passages it is evident that Philo conceived of the goodness and the sovereignty of God as powers which were highest in the hierarchy, under which the whole multitude of other powers can be classed. This would appear to be a neatly worked out system, if, as we have seen, the powers exercised their function according to a hierarchy, each in its own sphere. But such is not the case. These powers do not merely stand beside each other, but they also appear in each other. One partakes of some of the attributes of another. This obscures Philo's orderly arrangement of the powers, assuming that an orderly arrangement was intended at all.

As to the precise relation of these powers to God, no one seems to know just what Philo believed. He himself was aware of the difficulty and, therefore, recommended that this particular study be attempted by those only who were sufficiently trained. It has been observed, however, that Philo is here involved in a dilemma. Two influences cross - the religious

---

37. On the Cherubim, 27-28.

personal beings and the philosophical impersonal. Philo himself is not clear.[38] At times, the powers appear to be attributes of God and, collectively, represent the nature or essence of God.[39] But this would not solve Philo's problem, for it does not answer the question how the infinite God, transcending time and space, nevertheless acts upon the world. Certainly, Philo believed that He did. The passage which interpreters of Philo use most frequently to prove that he conceived of the powers as persons essentially different from God is cited by Drummond, who quotes Philo as saying,

> "[Out of matter] God generated all things, not touching it himself, for it was not right for the Wise and Blessed to come in contact with indeterminate and mixed matter; but he used the incorporeal powers, whose real name is ideas, that the fitting form might take possession of each genus."[40]

The idea appears to be that the powers surround God and wait upon Him in much the same manner as servants wait to do the king's bidding. In other instances, too, Philo creates the impression that God is above the powers, and, hence, they must in some measure be subordinate entities. There seems to be a definite distinction between "God in His essential being and God conceived under the partial aspect of the powers."[41]

The mediating aspect of these powere is introduced when Philo speaks of God as touching all things through His powers. The connection between the divine and the human is effected

---

38. Cf. Zeller, Die Philosophie der Griechen, pp. 611ff.
39. Cf. On Dreams, I, 232.
40. Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 113.
41. Ibid, Vol. II, p. 121.

through these mediating powers. God cannot touch the soul directly because He is transcendent, but He does this through the powers. In the human mind these powers would appear as thoughts, in matter as ideal forms. Inasmuch as they are divine and yet do not constitute the essence of God, the powers form the intermediate link between God and the world. "They are the connection between the universe and God, mediating between them, not because they are different from both, but because they are strictly separable from neither. Withdraw them from the mind, and it becomes a non-entity; withdraw them from the material world, and it ceases to be a cosmos; detach them, if that be conceivable, from God, and they will sink into nothingness."[42] And so, Philo refers to God under two aspects, God in His unknown and transcendent essence, and God as He is manifested through His powers.

In Philo's doctrine of the divine powers most writers agree that he is inconsistent and even contradictory, and if we would place opposite passages side by side, we too would perhaps agree. But Drummond, who appears to be Philo's most sympathetic interpreter, is not so ready to charge him with naive contradiction. In trying to find a reason for the apparent inconsistencies, he calls attention to Philo's fondness for personification, and he remarks that, since Philo throughout his writings personifies virtues, attributes, the parts of the soul, time, space, historical narratives, etc., we may regard his personification of the powers as figurative.[43]

---

42. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 116.
43. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 123ff.

Apparently, he is inclined to believe that Philo did not regard the logoi as distinct personalities. Whether Philo uses personifications merely in agreement with his principle that human language is not adaptable to divine mysteries, or whether he really believed the powers to be distinct beings, we shall perhaps never know. However, I believe his eclectic and harmonizing tendencies led him into a difficulty which he himself did not know how to solve. Had he not borrowed from, and tried to harmonize, so many diverse systems of thought, he would have been spared some difficult problems.

In regard to these divine powers or logoi, we must notice briefly four sources from which Philo borrowed. In the first place, he is largely indebted to Plato, particularly, Plato's doctrine of ideas. The best passage, showing the resemblance of Philo's powers to Plato's ideas, at least in their function on the universe, is found in his treatise On the Creation. In describing the manner in which God created the universe, Philo says:

> "For God, being God, assumed that a beautiful copy would never be produced apart from a beautiful pattern, and that no object of perception would be faultless which was not made in the likeness of an original discerned only by the intellect. So when He willed to create this visible world He first fully formed the intelligible world, in order that He might have the use of a pattern wholly God-like and incorporeal in producing the material world, as a later creation, the very image of an earlier, to embrace in itself objects of perception of as many kinds as the other contained objects of intelligence.
>
> To speak of or conceive that world which consists of ideas as being in some place is illegitimate; how it consists (of them) we shall know if we carefully attend to some image supplied by the things of our world. When a city is being founded to satisfy the soaring ambition of some king or governor, who lays claim to despotic power and

> being magnificent in his ideas would fain add a fresh lustre to his good fortune, there comes forward now and again some trained architect who, observing the favourable climate and convenient position of the site, first sketches in his own mind wellnigh all the parts of the city that is to be wrought out, temples, gymnasia, town-halls, market-places, harbours, docks, streets, walls to be built, dwelling-houses as well as public buildings to be set up. Thus after having received in his own soul, as it were in wax, the figures of these objects severally, he carries about the image of a city which is the creation of his mind. Then by his innate power of memory, he recalls the images of the various parts of this city, and imprints their types yet more distinctly in it: and like a good craftsman he begins to build the city of stones and timber, keeping his eye upon his pattern and making the visible and tangible objects correspond in each case to the corporeal ideas.
>
> Just such must be our thoughts about God. We must suppose that, when He was minded to found the one great city, He conceived beforehand the model of its parts, and that out of these He constituted and brought to completion a world discernible only by the mind, and then, with that for a pattern, the world which our senses can perceive. As, then, the city which was fashioned beforehand within the mind of the architect held no place in the outer world, but had been engraved in the soul of the artificer as by a seal; even so the universe that consisted of ideas would have no other location than the Divine Reason [λόγον], which was the Author of this ordered frame. For what other place could there be for His powers to receive and contain, I say not all but, any one of them whatever uncompounded and untempered?"[44]

Of course, true to his principle that all Greek philosophy borrowed from Moses, Philo bases this doctrine on passages from the Old Testament, giving it a Scriptural appeal. When it is said that "God created man in His own image",[45] Philo understands this to mean that man was created only like the image of God, not like God. In other words, man is the image of an image. This applies also to the whole visible cosmos, each perceptible

---

44. On the Creation, 16-20.

45. Cf. Genesis 1, 27.

object having an archetypal idea, which is its image. He also refers to Gen. 2, 4f to support his theory that God first created transcendental, incorporeal archetypes of all physical and material things. Another resemblance to Plato may by found, when Philo describes the powers as rays of light, which emanate from God and take up their residence as thoughts in the minds of men. This reminds us of Plato's world-soul, reaching out and expanding in the universe, parts of which form the minds of men. The same approach to the communion of the human with the divine is evident in both. We may mention here, too, that Philo's conception of God is similar to the Platonic unchangeable reason (νοῦς), although the Logos of Philo, having the two-fold aspect of inward, subjective and outward, objective functions, is more active in the world. These outward, objective activities are the logoi. Thus, in relation to the world, Philo read into his doctrine of intermediate beings all the leading thoughts of Plato's theory.

Another source which contributed to the formulation of Philo's doctrine of divine powers is the Old Testament doctrine of angels. It is not clear whether Philo identified angels and powers, but the resemblance between the two is evident. Angels were God's messengers and servants; so were the powers with Philo. One distinction, however, may be noted. The angels wers created, while Philo regards the powers as eternal. Furthermore, in passages where the person of God is referred to in the plural (actually, the editorial plural),[46] Philo believes that this signifies the powers cooperating with God

---

46. E.g., Gen. 1,26; 3,22; 11,7.

as obedient servants. Since, according to Philo, these powers also assisted in the creation, they cannot be angels, for angels are created beings. But whatever the relationship is between angels and divine powers, it is clear that elements of the Jewish doctrine of the angels are included in Philo's doctrine of the divine powers.

A third source which may have influenced Philo on this point is the Greek theory of demons. According to the Greeks, demons inhabited the air, that is, the space between the earth and the heaven. In this atmosphere they flew about, some descending into bodies and forming the souls of men, others, who were more pure and consecrated, remaining in the ethereal regions for the purpose of serving the Father of the universe.[47] This strongly resembles Philo's divine powers, which are also a host of beings separated from God, but mysteriously related to Him.

Finally, Philo was strongly influenced by the Stoics, especially the Stoic λόγος σπερματικός, or active cause, of which all phenomena in the universe are the result. As far as the powers are concerned, they closely resemble the doctrine of emanations which was peculiar to the Stoics. Philo, as we have already seen, describes the powers as parts of the Godhead that expand or radiate in the universe. This is the same function ascribed to the Stoic emanations. Both proceed from the Deity and become the cause of all things. It has been suggested that this Stoic doctrine influenced Philo most, since,

---

47. Cf. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 144.

on the one hand, angels and demons were a bit too personal for his system, while, on the other, the Platonic ideas were too abstract, being only archetypes and not moving powers.[48] In general, however, we may say that the divine powers of Philo were somewhere between Stoic emanations and Platonic ideas. Viewed on their immaterial side, they were divine thoughts; in their cosmic aspect they were motivating or efficient causes.[49]

The reason for our concern about the sources from which Philo borrowed this doctrine is to be found, first, in the importance which he attaches to these powers and, second, in the fact that Philo's doctrine was not original. Concerning the former, to understand something of Philo is to gain a general conception of what the powers or logoi are in his system. As Drummond remarks, "We meet these powers everywhere, for they alone give reality and meaning to all to all that we see and touch. They are the secret beauty in each humblest thing; they are the mighty bonds which constrain earth and ocean and sky into the harmony of a cosmos; and since they are but the varied expression of the divine energy, it is through them that the universe lies unfolded in the all-pervading immensity of God."[50] Nor could we understand the Logos concept of Philo without inquiring into the significance and function of the 'powers', for the latter are intimately connected with the former.

---

48. Cf. Zeller, Die Philosophie der Griechen, pp. 615ff.
49. Carpenter, op. cit., p. 299.
50. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 155.

As a matter of fact, all the powers "proceed from, are reconciled by, and are merged in the Logos - the cornerstone of Philo's system.[51] Philo, apparently, was unable to clearly define the powers, nor was he able to harmonize all of them, yet they are all comprehended in the one Logos, which is the most universal intermediary between God and the world.

As we approach the Logos doctrine itself, one of our first impressions is the many aspects under which Philo's Logos can be viewed. Drummond speaks of an enormous list of classifications made by Grossmann, in which the latter lists the many meanings of the Logos. Consequently, it is rather futile to search for a single, definite notion of Philo's Logos, for "it is the expression of God in all His multiple and manifold activity, the instrument of creation, the seat of ideas, the world of thought which God first established as the model of the visible universe, the guiding providence, the power of virtue, the fount of wisdom, described sometimes in religious ecstacy, sometimes in philosophical metaphysics, sometimes in the spirit of the mystical poet."[52] It is like "a crystal prism reflecting the light of the Godhead in a myriad different ways."[53] In other words, it is the complete aspect of God as He makes Himself known to the world.

We have already seen in connection with the divine powers the influence of the Jewish conceptions of Wisdom and the

---

51. William Fairweather, Jesus and the Greeks, p. 190.
52. Bentwich, op. cit., p. 148.
53. Ibid., p. 152.

creative Word of God, the Platonic ideas, the Stoic emanations and divine reason operating in the world. The same influences may be noted in Philo's Logos concept, for by combining all these doctrines Philo produced a kind of "mediatorial hypostasis" between God and the world. Moreover, the same difficulties that were encountered in determining the precise nature of the powers are to be met with in the Logos doctrine. In this doctrine Philo's eclecticism is perhaps more apparent than in any other of his theories, for this doctrine is the center of his system. This mixture of such diverse elements explains the lack of systematic formulation. Add to this Philo's gifts for imagination, his arbitrary use of allegory, his utter disregard for legitimate hermeneutics, and the result is a concept that defies understanding.

To mention a few of the innumerable aspects of the Logos, there is, first of all, Philo's conception of the Logos as mind, the rational part of the human soul. Because of its close connection with man's reason, these two are at times identified, and the Logos becomes a name for man's reason or understanding.[54] Again, the Logos may mean any abstract or impersonal expression of human reason or character.[55] In another sense, the Logos may signify speech, which is a product of reason. In this sense it applies especially to Scripture, for, according to Philo, Scripture is not merely the means through which the Logos speaks, but it is itself the Logos. Thus, with Philo, the Logos does not always denote the same thing.

---

54. Cf. the treatise On Abraham, 83.

55. Cf. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 158.

In its connection with the powers, it will be recalled that all the powers were comprehended in the Logos. According to Philo's cosmology, all perceptible objects are the result of the eternal ideas, whose impress or image they bear, so that the whole cosmos can be traced back to God's thought. God's thought or Reason is the most generic thing, under which the innumerable lesser thoughts or ideas are assembled and united. It is interesting to see how Philo tries to prove this. He refers to the incident in the Old Testament where God miraculously fed the children of Israel in the wilderness with manna,[56] and Philo concludes that this is symbolic of the divine thought of God nourishing the soul. He identifies this manna with the "word" of God and thus, as a logical consequence, with the "Logos of God."[57]

From this it is apparent that Philo regarded the Logos as the highest of all things that have come into being. God stands at the head of the hierarchy, supreme, then comes the Logos, which is second to God. From the Logos proceed all the logoi or divine powers. On this point, too, Philo is not without "Scriptural proof". An example of this superiority of the Logos is based on Exodus 25,22, where the Lord speaks of communicating with the children of Israel "from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony." From this Philo concludes that "the Logos is the driver of the powers but he who speaks is the rider, giving to the driver

---

56. Exodus 16, 15-16.

57. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 160.

the orders which tend to the correct driving of the universe."[58] In brief, then, all the powers are united and summed up in the Logos, for the Divine Thought comprehends all the divine thoughts. Since God is supreme, the Logos is beneath Him, is second to Him, and is contained in Him. This is Philo's conception of how the transcendent God becomes, through the agency of a hierarchy of powers, immanent in the universe.

Viewed from another angle, the Logos becomes the archetype or seal which is stamped upon both mind and matter. Philo says that the thought (λόγος) of the Maker is the seal by which each object in the universe has been stamped and shaped.[59] According to this conception, also the species which we see are perfect, being an impression of a perfect thought. Thus, we are told that "the Logos is the genus under which the various ideal types that are observed in the universe are classed, and that the permanence of specific forms, which till modern times was believed to be a fact of experience, is ascribed to their participation in the unchangeableness of creative thought."[60] Since man is the highest creature among all the objects of nature, he, therefore, has this divine impress in a pre-eminent degree. Indeed, the rational soul within man has been patterned after the archetypal idea of the divine image and is an impression of eternal Reason.

Philo also regarded the Logos as eternal. In doing so, however, he is involved in a contradiction, for if the Logos is to be regarded as an archetypal idea, it must have had a

---

58. Quoted in Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 161.
59. Cf. On Creation, 25.
60. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 165.

beginning. On the other hand, if the Logos existed in the eternal God, as "eternal Reason" or "His eternal image, the most sacred Logos", it must be without beginning. The solution seems to be that, whether it is hidden away in the divine essence and is thus subjective, or whether it has become objective by being imprinted on the universe, the idea is the same. Regarded as a law, in its essence it is eternal, though not in its application. And so, when the Logos is spoken of as "the most generic of all the things" that have been created, this refers only to its character of "Word", by which it impressed formless matter. In its relation to God, the Logos is eternal; in its relation to man, it is the beginning of all things.

These are some of the more prominent aspects of the Logos as conceived by Philo. They by no means exhaust the concept, but they serve to show in a general way Philo's idea of mediation between God and the universe. Other aspects will be dealt with more in detail as we observe the relation of the Logos to God and to man.

We have already viewed Philo's doctrine of God. Recalling this to mind, we proceed to place the Logos in its relation to the doctrine of God. In this respect the Logos is variously referred to as the Reason of God, the Son of God and the image of God. Here also we have the two-fold meaning - on the one hand, it appears as an attribute of God, as identical with divine Reason, on the other, as a self-sufficient being, a distinct personality.

It is clear that Philo regarded the Logos as the Reason of God. Offhand, we might recognize in this conception an opportunity to accuse Philo of an inconsistency, for how can he pretend to explain the Reason of God when his primary assumption is that God is incomprehensible. He resolves the difficulty by saying that we know God through the predicates ascribed to Him as they are manifested in the universe.[61] Having already dwelt upon the divine powers, we have seen that all these forces are merged into two chief powers - God's goodness and His sovereignty. These two are in turn the products of the Logos or rational power, from which all things have their cause. In this respect, then, the Logos is thought of as Reason - Reason in God and Reason in the universe. God Himself is not identified with Reason, for He transcends, and includes more than, Reason; but Reason is one of God's modes, or one of the manifestations of His Being. Mankind depends upon the Logos, this Reason, for its own rational power, but the transcendent God is over and above the Logos, for Reason or Logos depends upon God for its existence.

In another respect, the Logos is spoken of as the "Son of God." There is, however, no similarity whatsoever between this idea and the Christian conception of the Son of God. With Philo this was a mere figure of speech to denote the Logos as a product of the Self-existent Being. Because the Logos was dependent upon God for existence, it is thought of as a son, and this "always in its cosmical relations, that is, as the

---

61. Cf. p. 25.

Thought of God made objective in the universe."[62]

Yet the Logos was also the archetype of the universe, so that in its objective relation it became the image of God also. In his treatise On Dreams Philo speaks of the human soul, as well as the whole cosmos, as having been stamped "with His image and an ideal form, even His own Word" (λόγος).[63] On the basis of Genesis 1,27 he infers that both man and the universe, created in the image of God, bear the mark of the Divine Thought and are thus related to God. Since man is the highest creature in the universe, the human mind, that is, the rational part of it, is a sort of copy of the Logos. It is not as perfect as the Logos, nor indeed can it be, for the Logos is the archetype of all, the image of God. Here again, Philo pretends to use Scriptural proof, by referring to the words of Joseph's brothers spoken to Pharaoh, "We are all sons of one man",[64] and he goes on to say that, "if we have not yet become fit to be thought sons of God, yet we may be sons of His invisible image, the most holy Word. For the Word is the eldest-born image of God."[65] Thus, all visible things in the universe are an expression of the archetypal ideas or thoughts of God, which are centered in the Logos, but the Logos itself is God's image.

Here we are on the threshold of a mediating Logos. It is the link which connects the transcendent God and the finite

---

62. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 185.
63. On Dreams, II, 45.
64. Genesis 42, 11.
65. On the Confusion of Tongues, 147.

universe. In the mediating aspect of Philo's Logos there is summed up for us practically all that Philo has to say about the absolute essence of God as opposed to His revelation in the world. Through this mediating Logos Philo tries to harmonize the transcendence and the immanence of God. The Logos is, on the one hand, closely related to God, because it comes from Him and depends upon Him for existence and energy. On the other hand, it is intimately connected with the world, for it gives reality and activity to the visible things in the universe. That it occupies a middle position is seen from the fact that it is neither uncreated like God, nor created like the visible things. Philo is aware of this when he says,

> "To His Word, His chief messenger, highest in age and honour, the Father of all has given the special prerogative, to stand on the border and separate the creature from the Creator. This same Word both pleads with the immortal as suppliant for afflicted mortality and acts as ambassador of the ruler to the subject. He glories in this prerogative and proudly describes it in these words, 'and I stood between the Lord and you',[66] that is neither uncreated as God, nor created as you, but midway between the two extremes, a surety to both sides; to the parent, pledging the creature that it should never altogether rebel against the rein and choose disorder rather than order; to the child, warranting his hopes that the merciful God will never forget His own work. For I am the harbinger of peace to creation from that God whose will is to bring wars to an end, who is ever the guardian of peace."[67]

There is a difficulty here, of course, in the form of an unreasonable statement, for our minds cannot conceive of anything that is at once created and uncreated. Indeed, this is the crux of Philo's doctrine of the Logos. Despite all his imagination,

---

66. Deut. 5, 5.

67. Who is the Heir of Divine Things, 205-206.

his ingenuity, his allegorical interpretation, this difficulty remained unsolved. He certainly must have recognized such a glaring discrepancy, yet he was unable to resolve it. The mediating Logos was a convenient, though not always a consistent, instrument for his system, so that the difficulties apparently did not bother him over-much. It was his way of explaining the creative and the regal activity of God in the universe, the harmony between transcendence and immanence. "The Logos, therefore, is not a demiurge who acts for or instead of God, but it is God's own rational energy acting upon matter; and as a material world cannot, like a human work, be finished off and left to itself, this energy is always there, and links the cosmos to the infinite source of power and order."[68]

In its relation to man the Logos exercises the function of a moral law. In its physical aspect it gives reality to all the objects of creation and has control over all the ideal types, so that, in reality, it is the supreme cosmical law or power.[69] Now, by the analogy of microcosm and macrocosm, the human soul also has a rational power or reason, the counterpart of the universal reason. But since our own reason often errs, we designate the universal reason as "right reason" or "the reason of nature", since this is unchangeable and cannot err.[70] This law of nature is the Logos. In its relation to human beings this unchangeable cosmical law becomes a moral law, and we readily see the resemblance to the Stoic principle, "Live

---

68. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 193.

69. Here we note the resemblance between Philo's Logos and that of Heraclitus (the Logos as a law of the universe) and of the Stoics (the Logos as a cosmical power).

70. Cf. On Creation, 61.

conformably to nature." The substance of Philo's argument for this principle is found in the following passage:

> "Now since every well-ordered state has a constitution, the citizen of the world enjoyed of necessity the same constitution as did the whole world: and this constitution is nature's right relation, more properly called an 'ordinance', or 'dispensation', seeing it as a divine law, in accordance with which there was duly apportioned to all existences that rightly falls to them severally." [71]

Apparently, then, when one follows the law of nature, he is following God, since "'law is nothing but divine reason enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong', so that in doing the law we do the Logos, and our supreme end is to follow God." [72]

In another aspect, the Logos is the bond of the universe. Not only has it given form and reality to the objects in the universe, but it has distributed them in such a way that there is order and relation among them. It has separated all things into genus and species, giving them order and arrangement. In this respect, too, it is the sum-total of all the powers, since all the various powers which act upon the objects of the universe must necessarily be dependent upon the Logos, because the Logos controls these objects. In a passage in his treatise On Dreams Philo illustrates this by comparing the universe to a temple of God, in which the Logos serves as a high-priest. [73] In this capacity it ministers to all the parts of the universe, holding them together and preventing them from disintegrating

---

71. On Creation, 143.

72. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 167.

73. Cf. On Dreams, I, 213ff.

into formless matter, so that the Creator brought order out of disorder and confusion, and established the universe "upon the mighty Word who is My viceroy."[74]

A third aspect of Philo's Logos in its relation to the universe is this that it appears to be two-fold. It will be significant to recall at this point the two-fold division of the Stoic Logos or cosmical power into inward and uttered Logos (cf. p. 47). The Stoics applied this two-fold division to the universal Logos, but whether Philo conceived of the divine Logos as being similarly divided or whether it was two-fold only in its relation to man is not clear. According to Drummond, "two facts are equally certain, that Philo acknowledges a distinction of some sort in the universal Logos, and that, for some reason or other, he never expresses this distinction by the terms applied to the Logos in man."[75] It is true, the Logos is distinguished from the Supreme Being in that it is called θεός without the article, or δεύτερος θεός, but, says Zeller, "Wir haben kein Recht, den Widerspruch dieser Äusserungen durch die Annahme eines doppelten Logos, oder einer zweifachen Existenzform des Logos zu beseitigen, derjenigen, worin er dem göttlichen Wesen als Kraft oder Eigenschaft inwohnte, und derjenigen, in welche er bei seinem selbstständigen Hervortreten aus dem gottlichen Wesen einging, des λόγος ἐνδιάθετος und προφορικός ."[76] It is said that Philo speaks not of a double Logos, but of a double revelation of the Logos.

---

74. On Dreams, I, 241.

75. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 171.

76. Zeller, Die Philosophie der Griechen, p. 623.

In its simplest form the Logos is the thought of God. Now this thought may appear in two forms. First, it lies hidden in the mind of God, and, then, it is expressed or made objective in the universe. Before creation, the intelligible world, that is, the sum-total of all the immaterial ideas or archetypes, resided in the mind of God. However, when God spoke, the Logos was impressed upon matter, and the intelligible cosmos became a perceptible cosmos. We should not, however, regard the "inward Logos" as merely God's intention to create, or as only the initial purpose, but rather that "this inward conception, which sprang immediately from the creative purpose of God, was the intelligible cosmos, and this again, as we are expressly told, was the Logos."[77] There is an apparent contradiction here, since now the Logos is the thought of God, which produced the ideal world, and again, it is the intelligible world itself.

The reason for Philo's reluctance to apply the term "uttered" to the Word of God may be found in his tendency to do away with all anthropomorphisms. Speech implies a mouth and several other physical organs. But God cannot be said to have these physical organs, and thus the analogy breaks down. Consequently, Philo regarded the Word of God as an actual work, "for God in speaking created simultaneously, placing nothing between the two; - but if one ought to set going a truer opinion, the word is His work."[78] This two-fold aspect of the Logos Drummond has summed up thus: "the word and the deed are identical; the utterance is the

---

77. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 175.

78. Quoted in Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 181.

stamping of the divine and cosmical Thought upon matter; and the Logos, the Word, is the finished work, the Thought of God made objective, for the sole creation and the sole reality in this material universe is that Thought which resolves itself into a permeating tissue of ideas, and speaks to our reason as an expression of the supreme Mind."[79]

We have already seen that Wisdom[80] is an important concept in Philo's system, and we are now prepared to consider the relation of the Logos to Wisdom. This relationship is rather obscure and has been interpreted variously. Some writers have claimed that the Logos and Wisdom are identical, others have distinguished the two, subordinating the latter to the former and regarding Wisdom as one of the divine powers, which emanates from the Logos. Whether Philo himself was clear on this point is uncertain, for apparently there is no clear-cut statement in his writings which might show his definite position.

In the first place, there are certain statements which seem to indicate that the Logos and Wisdom were identified. Philo uses the two terms interchangeably, particularly in one instance where he is rendering an allegorical interpretation of the Garden of Eden.[81] He observes that the soul is waterd by the Divine Word which "descends from the fountain of Wisdom", and again in the same treatise the Divine Word is represented as "full of the stream of Wisdom." In fact, the whole passage leaves the impression that the two terms indicate one and the same thing. Secondly, Philo speaks of Wisdom in another place,

---

79. Ibid.

80. σοφία

81. Cf. On Dreams, II, 36ff.

using terms and thoughts which we should expect to be used only of the Logos.[82] In this instance he is commenting on Deut. 32,13, and he seems to regard Wisdom as the highest of all the powers, that which nourishes the soul. Now this same position and function is ascribed to the Logos, so that apparently the two terms are identified. In another instance Wisdom seems to be on a par with the Logos. In connection with the fourth commandment,[83] Philo, again employing allegory to its limit, speaks of God as the Father of the universe, and Wisdom as its mother, the instrument through which the universe was formed.[84] Again, there is a mingling of terms, for Philo assigns the creative function, which, as we have seen, was attributed to the Logos, to Wisdom. In view of all these instances, it would seem that Philo is rather inconsistent. Nowhere does he absolutely identify the two terms, yet he ascribes a particular function of the one to the other. Now this may be due to his special treatment of a certain passage, to a particular aim which he had in view, or to a chosen class of readers. And so, before we conclude that Wisdom and Logos are identical, it will be no more than fair to note an instance in which the two concepts are distinguished from one another.

According to Drummond, when Wisdom is represented as the mother of the cosmical Logos, "we may fairly take the latter to be the uttered Word, the former the eternal attribute of God."[85]

---

82. The Worse Attacks the Better, 115ff.
83. Exodus 20, 12.
84. On Drunkenness, 30ff.
85. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 210.

Yet it is not certain that Philo was conscious of this difference, for he never adopted the term "uttered Word." Still, it appears that, since Wisdom is the mother of the universe, and the Logos, as the seal of the universe, is its offspring, human wisdom is subordinate to divine Wisdom in the same relation as the species is to the genus. This has led Drummond to conclude that "the distinction in Philo's mind was not that between the inward and the uttered, but between the universal and the particular, and that what he meant to teach was that the divine principle of righteous law in each of us was the offspring of that cosmical law which 'preserves the stars from wrong'".[86]

In dealing with this particular point, however, we are treading on unsafe ground. Philo is trying to work out a rational explanation of the relation between the two concepts, Wisdom and the Logos, yet his allegory and his inconsistencies in language make him hard to understand. It becomes even more difficult to understand him, when he apparently indicates that he himself is not clear in his distinction. How can we understand the position of a man, when the man himself is not clear in his thought? Indeed, this is characteristic of Philo, so that there is really no formula which renders his position intelligible. In the final analysis, about all we can hope to accomplish in a study of Philo is to understand the man himself, rather than his doctrines. But to return to the discussion. Taken by and large, Wisdom and the Logos, in their ultimate

---

86. Ibid.

significations, seem to be identical. It is true, there are instances in which the two apparently occupy different positions, especially in their relation to the cosmos. In this objective aspect they are occasionally distinguished. But the over-all impression is that there is little practical difference between the two.

Now, we might have ended this discussion at this point, assuming that it would be of little consequence to press the point, were it not for the significance of the concept Wisdom. Philo, too, no doubt, could have escaped his inconsistencies and misunderstandings, had he not introduced Wisdom on so high a plane and had dealt only with the Logos. To Philo, the Jew, however, this was impossible. A Jew at that time, especially such a devout Jew as Philo, was too imbued with the idea of Wisdom to overlook it. The sacred Scriptures made too much of Wisdom for anyone to discount it. In the Book of Proverbs, especially, we note the importance attached to Wisdom. Since, therefore, Philo's training included a thorough knowledge of, and reverence for, the Old Testament Scriptures, Wisdom was bound to play a major role in his system. It has been suggested that Philo, as a result of his allegory, endeavored to find a word of the feminine gender, in order to complete his picture of the universe as the offspring of a Father (God) and a mother, and that, accordingly, he adopted σοφία or Wisdom to denote the feminine agency. If we recall Philo's fondness for tinkering with individual words, this might serve as a motive. Indeed, there is a passage in which Philo indicates that such a motive

may have prompted him to make use of the term Wisdom. In his treatise De Profugis he says:

> "Bethuel, which, being interpreted, means the daughter of God, is a name of Wisdom. Nevertheless, Bethuel is called the father of Rebecca. How can the daughter of God be justly termed a father? Because the name of wisdom is feminine, but its nature masculine. So all the virtues have the titles of women, but the powers and actions of man; for that which is after God, even though it be older than all other things, is feminine in comparison with that which makes the universe, the male always having the prerogative. Hence, Wisdom, the daughter of God, is masculine and a father, generating in souls learning, instruction, science, prudence, beautiful and laudable actions." [87]

But Drummond suggests a more practical reason, a reason which seems to be more in keeping with Philo's attempt to commend the Hebrew Scriptures to the Greek world. For this reason, it is said, Philo found Wisdom to be a word more serviceable to put across certain ideas. To quote Drummond's words, "It [Wisdom] is almost invariably used in relation to mankind. It is the divine food and drink of the human soul, the dwelling-place of those that love virtue, the perfect way of human life, the fountain from which the sciences are watered; and even in the few passages where it is spoken of as instrumental in the act of creation, it is nearly always brought into connection with men. It is a reasonable inference that it is often used on account of its more distinct personal associations, and because it expresses a source and form of character and attainment which are not so well indicated by the less definite term Logos." [88] Still, in Philo's system Wisdom

---

87. The treatise from which this passage is taken is not included in Colson and Whitaker's unfinished edition, but the passage is quoted in Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 213.

88. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 212.

could never take the place of Logos. To an ordinary Jew, Wisdom might serve the purpose, but a Greek would not be overly impressed by this term. Now, since Philo attempted a harmonization of the two systems of thought, he, no doubt, found the term Logos to be of more value for his purpose. The Greeks were acquainted with that term, and this made Philo's approach much more direct. If one were to attempt an analogy, a parallel could be drawn between this attempt of Philo and the attempt of some of the first missionaries to commend Christianity to the Chinese by substituting Christian names for Chinese concepts. In other words, Philo found in the term Logos a more suitable vehicle for conveying the doctrines of Judaism to the Greeks. It was a term more flexible, capable of being understood by both Jews and Greeks. The idea, then, that Philo preferred Logos to Wisdom for practical purposes does not seem to be too remote.

We now come to an extremely important aspect of Philo's Logos, and, since we are again confronted by an issue that is not settled, we should, perhaps, begin the discussion on this point by asking the question, Is, or is not, Philo's Logos a distinct personality? The answer to this question will, undoubtedly, help us to form our opinion and estimate of Philo as a theologian. On this question of a personal or impersonal Logos Philo's worth as a teacher of religion. All the other aspects of his Logos may or may not have importance, depending entirely upon the answer to this question. From a Christian point of view, then, the answer to this question is the criterion

which makes Philo either a man to be studied or a man who has little significance, as far as Christian doctrine is concerned. Of Philo's theology contains an impersonal Logos, that is, if his Logos is merely a metaphysical force or power, then the best we can say of Philo is this that he was an outstanding pagan philosopher and a great mystic. His only contribution to the world's thought would be, in that case, a religious interpretation of Greek philosophy. That would be the extent of our interest in him. Christianity could never respect him as a theologian, if he pictured the Mediator between God and men as an impersonal world force. On the other hand, if the Logos of Philo is personal, that is, if a distinct personal Being is to be regarded as the Mediator between the transcendent God and the material universe, then our interest in Philo as a religious teacher is aroused. An impersonal Logos has no significance for us outside of its purely intellectual and historical aspects, but a personal Logos tends to arouse our attention and investigation, because, whereas to Christianity the former means nothing, the latter is all-important. And yet, even if we were to learn that Philo conceived of the Logos as a personal Being, we would still not be prepared to adopt his doctrine, since his Logos may not be the Logos of Scripture. These points we are now prepared to examine.

It will be recalled that in speaking of the divine powers, we were compelled to take into account Philo's fondness for personification, and his rhetorical style. Add to this the vague philosophical speculation of his day, and his method

either becomes plausible or it covers a multitude of sins, depending upon the point of view. This applies with equal directness to the Logos as personal or impersonal. The same difficulties apply here as did to the "powers", since Philo's own statements are obscure. As a result he is accused by some interpreters of speaking of the Logos as a second God, subordinate to the Supreme Being, but yet a separate personality. Again, he is accused of vacillating between such a personal Deity and an impersonal force or power. It will be well to keep these characteristics of Philo in mind, for we can hardly imagine that Philo, whose entire system is based on the Logos doctrine, was himself uncertain as to the personal or impersonal nature of the Logos. Of such an important part of his doctrine he, no doubt, had an established opinion, even though he is not always consistent in teaching it. We simply cannot always take Philo literally, because obviously he himself did not mean to be understood literally. Furthermore, a literal interpretation of Philo on this point, which would suggest a Deity subordinate to the Supreme God, would mean that "the champion of Jewish monotheism wanders into a vague ditheism."[89] With Philo this would be unlikely. Drummond also argues against a personal Logos in Philo, attributing the vagueness and inconsistency of language to a fondness for personification which was reinforced by allegorical interpretation. He remarks, "The persons of Old Testament history become the symbols of abstract qualities, and consequently the allegory is frequently

89. Bentwich, op. cit., p. 155.

responsible for the ascription of personal attributes to the general idea. The Logos comes in for its share of this treatment."[90] In his An Introduction to Philo Judaeus, Goodenough suggests that, viewed from different angles, the Logos ban be both personal and impersonal without involving a contradiction, since a demand for sharp and distinct definitions in our modern thought was not characteristic of Greek philosophic speculation. In other words, thoughts and concepts which may appear incompatible to us may have been no problem for the ancient philosophers. In line with this argument, Goodenough says, "If we are to follow Philo rather than our own categories we shall have to learn with him to answer the questions Yes and No simultaneously. If Philo were asked the question he would undoubtedly have fallen back into his purer metaphysics and denied that the Logos was anything but the flow of divine Reality, and that the Logos had no more reality in itself than has a ray of sunshine apart from the sun. Yet his soul was so warmed by the Logos-ray of God that he often thought of that ray as a thing in itself, something which could be made vivid by personification, even a rudimentary mythology, as he tried to impress the fulness of his thought and experience."[91] Further, in a discussion as to the personal or impersonal nature of Philo's Logos, one must be rather cautious in drawing conclusions from the writings themselves, for there are certain passages about the Logos in Philo which are regarded as spurious, a fact

---

90. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 225.

91. An Introduction to Philo Judaeus, p. 133.

which most of the editors of the texts recognize.[92]

Now, one of the arguments most used to prove that Philo regarded the Logos as personal is the fact that he applies the term angel to the logoi, the Logos presumably being the highest angel or archangel. In one passage it is said of the Logos, "but let us rather call it an angel or herald",[93] and in speaking of the logoi, he remarks, "which it is customary to call angels."[94] But if we remember Philo's system of allegory and recall also that the Logos is referred to by countless other names besides angel, we can hardly conclude that, since it is called an angel, it must be personal. Moses, for example, also stands for the Logos, as the common reason of mankind. Aaron represents the uttered Logos, the faculty of speech in man. Even the priests stood for reason in man, the high priest, who presided over them all, representing the universal, cosmical Logos. The Logos could hardly be all these persons at the same time and yet retain a distinct personality. The point is that, if we cannot strictly identify the Logos with Moses, the human mind, the high priest, etc., then neither can we by purely literal interpretation assume that the Logos is a person simply because Philo calls it an angel, for what is literally true of one ought to be literally true of another, unless otherwise stated. In other words, we may assume that Philo was not attempting to personify the Logos when he refers to it as an angel, for, as Drummond remarks, "though the Logos assumed

---

92. On this point see Bentwich, op. cit., p. 156.

93. On the Life of Moses, I, 66.

94. On Dreams, I, 115.

personality the moment it appeared in finite individual minds, it does not at all follow that the abstract idea was conceived of as a person."[95] This latter remark appears to be in line with Philo's basic principle that God was transcendent above the Logos as well as the universe, and could therefore in no personal way come into contact with anything beneath Him.

Philo is here making full use of allegory, and the term "angel" ought to be understood in a purely figurative sense. In this connection we may notice two approaches to interpretation which Philo employed. First, he speaks of the accounts in Scripture as historical facts and uses "angels"; then, he allegorizes and uses "logoi", so that actually "the angel of Scripture represents allegorically the Logos of philosophy."[96] To use an analogy, the Logos may be called the angel of God in the same sense that the powers of the human soul to think, feel and act may be regarded as angels or messengers of the human mind. This rather precludes personality. The conclusion, then, seems to be that the Logos is not a person, but only a rational energy or force which assumed various personalities as it entered individual souls, or as Drummond puts it, "the Logos is not a person, but rather an essence of personality derived from God and communicated to man, and constituting the intermediate link or energy by which the infinite person imparts himself to his finite children."[97]

As the image of God and the archetype of man, the Logos

---

95. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 226.

96. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 270.

97. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 227.

also appears to be a person. Here the number seven comes into play,[98] for the Logos is spoken of as "holy reason of which Seven is the keynote."[99] The number seven is regarded as representative of the image of God, because of all the numbers from one to ten it alone is neither produced nor produces another whole number by multiplication. "It is, therefore, the motherless virgin, who is said to have sprung from the head of Zeus, and remains immovable, for all genesis consists in movement. But the elder Ruler and Sovereign alone neither moves nor is moved, and consequently seven would be properly called his image."[100] All things in the cosmos are said to be dependent upon the number seven (the seven planets, seven stars in the various constellations, seven days in the week, seven-fold division of the lower part of the soul, seven internal and external organs of the body, seven modifications of the voice, the seventh day of creation, etc).[101] Apparently, then, a thought or idea is really God's image impressed upon creation. It is, functionally, the Logos itself, since we have already seen that the Logos is God's image. But although it is the image of God and the archetype of man, we would not, strictly speaking, call it a person. To represent a number as a person would be sheer nonsense.

---

98. In regard to fondness for playing with numbers, the Pythagorean influence upon Philo will be noted. Throughout, Philo speculates on the significance of numbers, putting them to as much elaborate use as did the Pythagoreans.

99. Allegorical Interpretation, I, 16.

100. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 231. See also the treatise On Creation, 100.

101. On Creation, 111ff.

Again, it is claimed that Philo's identification of mind[102] with the Logos proves that the Logos is a personality. But this does not follow particularly, inasmuch as we have seen that Philo speaks of the human mind as flowing from the divine Reason. In this respect the Logos is merely the higher Mind from which all human reason is copied, the latter bearing the stamp or seal of the former, not necessarily implying personality, but merely indicating an abstract thought.

Our final conclusion is that the Logos of Philo is not a distinct personality, but only the highest power, the power which at once assembles and diffuses all other powers, emanating from God and made objective in the universe. This conclusion seems to be most consistent with the rest of Philo's system. Particularly, is it in keeping with his basic principles of transcendence and immanence. An impersonal Logos conceivably could escape the difficulties of contradiction when it is made to serve as the connecting link between an infinite God amd a finite universe. But a personal Logos would be involved in all manner of inconsistencies and contradictions, for in relation to the world it would have to be connected in some way with the universe and yet this could not be, because it is an immaterial Divine Being, and, on the other hand, in relation to God it would have to be bound up with Him in some way, which would also be impossible because it is lower than God. These are the difficulties in which a personal, philosophical Logos is involved. The Christian religion, because it is a religion

---

102. νοῦς

of revelation and not of reason, is not aware of these difficulties.

In its practical aspect, Philo's Logos is too philosophical. It is not as thoroughly pagan as the Logos of purely Greek philosophy, because Philo includes in his Logos concept the idea of a transcendent God. He adorns a pagan concept with a religious garb. Yet, while this religious philosopher takes God into consideration, his Logos concept, from a Christian standpoint, is entirely inadequate. Thus, when the evangelist says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,"[103] Philo would readily agree, but when the inspired writer says, "and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,"[104] this would be entirely repugnant to Philo.

To conclude this discussion of Philo's Logos, we quote these words of Drummond:

> "From first to last the Logos is the Thought of God, dwelling subjectively in the infinite Mind, planted out and made objective in the universe. The cosmos is a tissue of rational force, which images the beauty, the power, the goodness of its primeval fountain. The reason of man is this same rational force entering into consciousness, and held by each in proportion to the truth and variety of his thoughts; and to follow it is the law of righteous living. Each form which we can differentiate as a distinct species, each rule of conduct which we can treat as an injunction of reason, is itself a Logos, one of those innumerable thoughts or laws into which the universal Thought may, through self-reflection, be resolved. Thus, wherever we turn, these Words, which are really Works, of God confront us, and lift our minds to that uniting and cosmic Thought which, though comprehending them, is itself dependent, and tells us of that impenetrable Being from whose inexhaustible fulness it comes, of whose perfections it is the shadow, and whose splendours, too dazzling for all but the purified intuitions of the highest souls, it at once suggests and veils."[105]

---

103. John 1, 1.

104. John 1, 14.

105. Philo Judaeus, Vol. II, p. 273.

IV

Doctrine of Man

Thus far we have considered Philo's conception concerning the existence and nature of God, and have then examined the Logos, which proceeds from God. It remains now to look at Philo's views concerning man. We may approach this subject from two angles. First of all, we shall examine briefly Philo's views on man as one of the beings belonging to creation and, secondly, the more important of the two, attempt to learn what Philo has to say about man as a moral being.

In his theory of man as a natural object of creation Philo manifests a dualism. Like Plato, he is very explicit in ascribing to man two parts - soul and body.[1] His ideas concerning the characteristics of man's body, no doubt, flowed from the theories which were current in his day among Greek philosophers. Certainly, he did not get his ideas from Moses. In one of his treatises he describes man's body thus:

> "Those who have most carefully examined the facts of nature say that the four elements are proportionally equal, and that the whole world received and retains for ever its frame, through being compounded according to this same proportion, which assigned an equal measure to each of the parts. They tell us, too, that our four constituents, dry, wet, cold and hot, have been mixed and harmonized by proportional equality and that we are nothing more than a compound of the four factors mixed on this principle."[2]

It is clear from this passage that man's body consisted of the same four elements out of which the universe was created, and for that reason was, like the universe, corruptible.

---

1. Cf. Allegorical Interpretation, III, 161.
2. Who is the Heir of Divine Things, 152-153.

Turning to the other element constituting man's make-up, the soul, we find that this, too, is divided into several parts. Here, however, Philo becomes somewhat ambiguous, for at times he speaks of a three-fold division of the soul, while on other occasions he emphasizes a two-fold division. But the difficulty usually disappears, if we observe his point of view. When referring to the function of the soul, he speaks of the latter as having three parts or properties - sense perception, mental representation (which is the impression of the sense perception on the soul), and impulse (which may result in desire or aversion). But when referring to the composition of the soul, Philo speaks of a two-fold division, the rational and irrational parts, the former being divine, the latter corruptible. In this respect man and the animals differ, for, whereas both enjoy the irrational part or the vital principle, man alone possesses that higher part, the rational principle. On the surface, then, there is an apparent ambiguity in the use of the word "soul". I think, however, the distinction may be explained by viewing each under its proper aspect - the three-fold division in its functional aspect and the two-fold division in its essential aspect. Or, from another angle, when man is viewed as an object of creation, his soul consists of three parts, but when he is looked upon as a moral being, the two-fold division obtains.

Now just because Philo is so deeply interested in man as a moral being and speaks at great length about ethics, he

usually adheres to the two-fold division of man's soul.[3] Accordingly, our impression of Philo on this point would be quite correct, if we regarded this two-fold division as permanent and established with him. For practical purposes, it is the division that he observes.

As far as the composition of the irrational part of the soul is concerned, we have little information from Philo's writings. Drummond resorts to one of the Greek fragments, however, and says that Philo, basing his views on the authority of Moses,[4] regarded this lower, mortal part of the soul as "strictly consisting of air, which is inextricably mingled with the blood."[5] With regard to its function, we may refer to Philo's treatise On Creation and there observe that the inferior part of the soul is in turn divided into seven parts - the five senses, and the faculties of speech and reproduction.[6] Here Philo evidently borrows from the Stoics, who also conceived of a seven-fold division of the soul.[7]

But the highest and sovereign part of the soul is the rational part. The most usual, though not exclusive, term

---

3. Philo's references to the three-fold division of the soul are rare. One instance is an allegorical interpretation of Gen. 15 found in Allegorical Interpretation, III, 39ff. My own opinion is that such a division was introduced merely as another point of contact with Greek philosophy. In other words, Philo occasionally adopted this tripartite division (already used by Plato and Aristotle) merely as an accommodation to Greek thought.

4. Genesis 9,4; Deut. 12,23.

5. Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 321.

6. ½117.

7. Cf. Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, p. 218.

applied to this rational part of the soul is mind (νοῦς). Indeed, "it is the masculine portion within us, while the irrational part is feminine."[8] However, Philo himself admits that we cannot be too certain as to the exact essence of the mind. This he expresses in the following passage:

> "The mind that is in each of us can apprehend other objects, but is incapable of knowing itself. For just as the eye sees other objects but does not see itself, so the mind too perceives other objects, but does not apprehend itself. Can it say what it is and of what kind, breath or blood or fire or air or anything else? Can it even say that it is a body or else that it is incorporeal? Are not they simpletons, then, who inquire about God's substance? For how should those, who know not the substance of their own soul, have accurate ideas about the soul of the universe? For we may conceive of God as the soul of the universe."[9]

And yet, in opposition to materialism, he tried to show that Moses, recognizing a two-fold division of the soul, taught that the rational part was "spirit." Once again appealing to the authority of Moses, Philo says,

> "To the faculty which we have in common with the irrational creatures blood has been given as its essence; but to the faculty which streams forth from the fountain of reason breath has been assigned; not moving air, but, as it were, an impression stamped by the divine power, to which Moses gives the appropriate title of 'image', thus indicating that God is the Archetype of rational existence, while man is a copy and likeness."[10]

This passage is highly significant, because it contains a clear picture of Philo's opinion on the rational part of the soul. But there is something else here that claims our attention. While it is clear from the preceding discussion that the

---

8. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 324.
9. Allegorical Interpretation, I, 91.
10. The Worse Attacks the Better, 83.

irrational part of the soul, which is shared by the animals, is formed from matter, the rational part, Philo implies, is divine, since it was breathed into man by God. In a word, man has part of the Divine Spirit within him. This theory of emanation, apparently, was an established conviction with Philo, for in the treatise just referred to he goes on to say that the only reason that the mind of man, being so small, could "have room for all the vastness of sky and universe" is this that it must be

> "an inseparable portion of that divine and blessed soul. For no part of that which is divine cuts itself off and becomes separate, but does but extend itself. The mind, then, having obtained a share of the perfection which is in the whole, when it conceives of the universe, reaches out as widely as the bounds of the whole, and undergoes no severance; for its force is expansive." //

All this, of course, prepares the way for Philo's theory as to how man comes into intimate relation with God. If man's soul, at least the rational part of it, is of divine origin, then it has direct access to God. Indeed, man is but a step from reaching God.

But there is another implication. If the sovereign part of the soul is of divine origin, this suggests its pre-existence. Philo firmly believed this. He speaks of two classes of souls that inhabit the air (cf. p. 63). Some, for reasons unknown, descend into mortal bodies on earth and dwell in those bodies for fixed periods, after which they return to the air. Others, more pure, remain in the air, keeping aloof from all mortal

---

11. The Worse Attacks the Better, 90.

contact.[12] Just why certain ones, and not others, descend to earth Philo does not seem to explain, nor is he very clear as to why some men receive good souls and others evil. His only explanation, according to Drummond, is that there must be "an original difference in moral quality among souls".[13] And yet, we cannot ascribe any moral evil to any of these legitimate incorporeal spirits. Only those false souls who "slip into the name of angels", but are not worthy of the name, can be called evil.

It is almost self-evident to remark that Philo also believed in the immortality of the soul. The pre-existent soul descends into the human body, sojourns there for a definite time and returns to the air.[14] The benefit derived from its descent is not explained, although it has been suggested that "such rare spirits can have come only for the sake of seeing and learning; and when they have personally observed all perceptible and mortal things, and thus added to their stock of wisdom, they return to the place whence they came."[15]

Another mark which distinguishes man from the animals is man's possession of will. This Philo teaches in the following passage:

> "For it is mind alone which the Father who begat it judged worthy of freedom, and loosening the fetters of necessity, suffered it to range as it listed, and of that free-will which is His most peculiar possession and most worthy of His majesty gave it such portion as it was capable of receiving. For

---

12. Cf. On the Confusion of Tongues, 176-177; see also On Dreams, I, 138-141.
13. Op. cit., I, p. 338.
14. Cf. On Creation, I, 138-139.
15. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 337.

> the other living creatures in whose souls the mind, the element set apart for liberty, has no place, have been committed under yoke and bridle to the service of men, as slaves to a master. But man, possessed of a spontaneous and self-determined will, whose activities for the most part rest on deliberate choice, is with reason blamed for what he does wrong with intent, praised when he acts rightly of his own will. In the others, the plants and animals, no praise is due if they bear well, nor blame if they fare ill: for their movements and changes in either direction come to them from no deliberate choice or volition of their own. But the soul of man alone has received from God the faculty of voluntary movement, and in this way especially is made like to him, and thus being liberated, as far as might be, from that hard and ruthless mistress, necessity, may justly be charged with guilt, in that it does not honour its Liberator. . . He [God] had made him free and unfettered, to employ his powers of action with voluntary and deliberate choice for this purpose, that, knowing good and evil and receiving the conception of the noble and the base, and setting himself in sincerity to apprehend just and unjust and in general what belongs to virtue and what to vice, he might practice to choose the better and eschew the opposite."[16]

Not only was man, unlike the animals, created with a rational principle, but he is distinguished by his mode of conduct. The animals act only from instinct and, under given circumstances, respond only in one way; man has the ability to consider alternatives and to prefer one action to another. This means also that, whereas animals cannot be held accountable for moral evil, man is responsible for wrong-doing, and he ought "to choose the better and eschew the opposite."[17]

These are some of the more general aspects of Philo's conception of the essence of man. Consisting of both body and soul, man is in this respect on a level with the animals. Yet he is distinguished from the animal creation inasmuch as he

---

16. On the Unchangeableness of God, 47-49.

17. Cf. Deut. 30, 15.19.

possesses a rational principle, particularly, since this rational, or sovereign, principle, is of divine origin. In this respect man is taken out of the category of animals and is regarded as a moral being with definite responsibilities and desires.

From these considerations it is but a step into the field of ethics and to the study of man as a moral being. Here we shall see what Philo's views were in regard to man's coming into union with God and how man is conditioned, so that he may be capable of having communion with the Divine. Here also Philo passes from philosophy to mysticism.

We have just discussed the dualistic nature of man, and we need only refer to the philosophy of man's creation, in order to complete the picture of his appearance upon the phenomenal scene. As a disciple of Moses, Philo, of course, could not overlook the Mosaic teaching that man was created in God's image. Yet, influenced by Greek philosophy, Plato in particular, he injects into the words of Moses his own philosophical notions. Accordingly, just as every object of nature had its ideal pattern in the perceptible world, so man himself was created according to an archetype, the generic man. Appealing to Scripture, Philo says that the word "created"[18] indicates that God first made the generic man according to His own image, while the word "formed"[19] shows that subsequently the species, Adam, was molded out of clay. To this theory Philo gives expression in the following

---

18. Cf. Genesis 1, 27.
19. Cf. Genesis 2, 7.

words:

> "That what were created in the first instance were genera, is evident from the words employed, 'Let the earth bring forth the living soul', not according to species but 'according to kind'. And we find Him in every instance working in this way. Before the species He completes the genera. He does so in the case of man. Having first fashioned man as a genus, in which the prophet says that there is the male and the female genus, He afterwards makes Adam, the finished form or species."[20]

In other words, the archetypal man was made in God's image, while the earthly man was only an imperfect reproduction of the ideal man.[21] In keeping with Scripture, Philo regards Adam, the first earthly man, as having been created good and beautiful.[22] However, this cannot be said of Adam's descendants for the simple reason that they were born of human beings, while Adam was created directly by God. As a metter of fact, from Adam on down, the passing generations decreased in goodness.[23] In reality, this downward tendency began with Adam himself, because he made a wrong choice, having selected the evil instead of the good, so that in all succeeding generations "an increasing dimness has fallen upon the powers and qualities both of body and soul."[24]

Yet this original guilt does not mean total depravity. Philo does not teach the total corruption of man. On the

---

20. Allegorical Interpretation, II, 13.

21. Drummond calls attention to the fact that this involves a difficulty regarding the pre-existent soul. Philo believes that man's soul is pre-existent, but he also says that God breathed into man the breath of life. He makes no attempt to explain this. Cf. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 277.

22. Cf. On Creation, 135-150.

23. This entire subject of man's degeneracy is explained in the treatise On Creation.

24. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 279.

contrary, he has a high opinion of man's spiritual worth. Man was created in the image of God, that is, the Logos, and through this image or Logos he comes into relationship with God. His own reason is a pattern of this Logos, which is the archetype of human reason. Furthermore, the sovereign part of man's soul, being a fragment of the Divine, retains its divine potentialities. Even the most lowly and abominable men are not entirely without the ability to do good and to come into communion with the Divine, if they want to do so. On this point Philo remarks:

> "For when He rains upon the sea, and causes springs to gush forth in the depths of the desert, and waters the poor and rough and barren soil, pouring on it rivers with their overflowings, what else does He prove save the exceeding greatness of His own wealth and goodness? This is the reason for which He created no soul barren of virtue, even if the exercise of it be to some impossible." [25]

Thus, God has made every soul with some good in it, so that "none are wholly destitute of visitings of the divine Spirit".[26] It is the duty of each individual, then, to use this good, to make the right decisions and to reject the evil and choose the good.[27] This can be done, according to Philo, because man has a higher and a lower nature, which offer the possibilities of choosing either good or evil.

But now the question arises, what, in Philo's opinion, constitutes the good for which man is to strive, and what is

---

25. Allegorical Interpretation, I, 34.

26. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 280.

27. Here the contrast between the theology of Philo and that of Paul is evident. While Philo makes good and evil a matter of personal choice, Paul says, "the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." (Rom. 7,19).

the evil that he ought to shun? Regarding the former, it is assumed that the highest good concerns the soul, the sovereign principle in man, because this sovereign part of man's soul is the determining factor in man's nature. Hence, the highest good must be something spiritual, as opposed to that which satisfies the body. This highest good, Philo believes, is to be found in happiness or blessedness. In the treatise On Rewards and Punishments he says,

> "The hope of happiness incites also the devotees of virtue to study wisdom, believing that thus they will be able to discern the nature of all that exists and to act in accordance with nature and so to bring to their fulness the best types of life, the contemplative and the practical, which necessarily make their possessor a happy man."[28]

From this passage it is apparent that a state of happiness is the goal of the righteous man. But this can be found only through the practice of virtue, so that virtue really becomes an end in itself.[29] Indeed, we are told that "the man of worthy aims sets himself to acquire day for the sake of day, light for the sake of light, the beautiful for the sake of the beautiful alone, not for the sake of something else . . . for this is the divine law, to value excellence for its own sake."[30] But to practice and enjoy virtue is to attain to only a portion of the highest good. It is excellent for the ordinary truth-seeker, but it cannot satisfy the deeply religious man. For

---

28. On Rewards and Punishments, 11.

29. Whether Philo was "influenced" by the Stoics on this point we are not prepared to say, but there is a resemblance to Stoic ethics, specifically, in regard to the virtues. Cf. Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, p. 219f.

30. Allegorical Interpretation, III, 167.

the latter, it is only preliminary to his attainment of a higher goal, which is to practice virtue for the sake of honoring God. Obviously, there is a distinction in degrees of spirituality, for "in the lower stage of moral progress we are instructed not to neglect what is established as righteous by ordinance and universal repute, but when we have risen high enough to understand the lessons of right reason, we are taught to honour the Father of all".[31] Now, the only way in which we can honor God is to do the things that please Him, and to try to follow Him in the ways that the virtues indicate.[32] And so, our supreme goal is to follow God and to imitate Him as far as this is possible.[33]

However, in order to do this, man must at the same time overcome the forces of evil. This leads to a consideration of the nature of evil. With Philo, the greatest evil is self-love. Turning to oneself or to that which is begotten is the logical alternative of seeking after God. "He who flees from God takes refuge in himself." Nor can one claim to be the victim of error or of ignorance in his thinking. No mitigating circumstances can be introduced. Either a man strives to Follow God or he is guilty of self-love. This Philo states emphatically in the following passage:

> "We must indeed reject all those who 'beget for themselves', that is all those who pursue only their own profit and think not of others. For they think

---

31. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 286.

32. Cf. On Creation, 143-144.

33. This living according to God clearly resembles the Stoical maxim, "Live conformably to nature."

> themselves born for themselves only and not for the innumerable others, for father, for mother, for wife, for children, for country, for the human race, and if we must extend the list, for heaven, for earth, for the universe, for knowledge, for virtues, for the Father and Captain of all; to each of whom we are bound according to our powers to render what is due, not holding all things to be an adjunct of ourselves, but rather ourselves an adjunct of all." [34]

When it is asked what the sources of all evil are, Philo gives several answers. To begin with, the most general source of evil is attributed to the fact that man belongs to the phenomenal world and is thus exposed to evil. God, of course, is eternal and holy, and by contrast everything finite is transient and corrupt. Yet, according to Philo, man is not altogether sinful, because he has the element of the Divine in the sovereign part of his soul. Moreover, by virtue of this "reason" within him, man has the privilege and the ability to choose between goodness and evil. If he chooses evil, it is only because he has become too closely associated with the mortal element, which is the body. Now this mortal element, the body, hinders man's spiritual aspirations, not because it is material, but because "it is phenomenal, transient, mortal, and therefore antithetic to that world of eternal ideas amid which reason lives, and where alone the virtues can be won." [35] Apparently, Philo was not ready to ascribe evil to matter. Indeed, this would be contrary to his principle that everything that God made was good. Matter itself, being pre-existent, was not intrinsically evil. Nor, as we have seen, did it become evil through any such thing as a Fall, because, according

---

34. On the Unchangeableness of God, 19.

35. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 297.

to Philo, man's degeneracy is due only to his exercise of the wrong choice. And so, it is only because the body is phenomenal that it is opposed to the soul. Of course, this is purely philosophical reasoning and does not agree with the Scriptural account of man's Fall. Man's goal is to escape from participation in the phenomenal existence and to strive to be associated with the incorporeal and incorruptible life. This means that the senses are not only to be controlled, but they are to be abandoned.[36]

In a practical way, then, the body is only a prison or tomb which contains the real man, in which the soul dwells as a sojourner.[37] It is not merely passive or neutral in the strifes and battles between wickedness and goodness, but it is a definite hindrance, preventing man's soul from enjoying the freedom of full communion with God. In this respect the body is evil, "not intrinsically, but because it acts as an impediment to the higher aspirations of the soul, and, through its necessities, draws off our attention, and sometimes our allegiance, from that which is spiritual.[38]

Now, if the body itself, because of its association with the phenomenal world, is evil, how much more evil are not the lesser things attached to this world! Again, moral evil is not inherent in these things (for everything that God made was good), but they become evil when the soul attaches more importance to them than to God, or when we "make them rather than reason

---

36. Allegorical Interpretation, III, 151ff.
37. Allegorical Interpretation, III, 69.
38. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 299.

a standard of reference." Thus, the senses and the passions, too, can be definite hindrances in man's spiritual life. In the same treatise, to which we have been lately referring, Philo speaks of the passions as being neither morally good nor morally bad, but occupying a neutral position.[39] Evil men use them as ends in themselves; righteous men regard them only as necessities. Accordingly, the passions are evil, not in themselves, but in the use that is made of them. It will not be necessary to go into Philo's psychology of the passions, yet it should be noted that Philo recognizes two kinds - good and bad. The former he calls rational and the latter irrational,[40] which, in view of what has been said above about the difference between the rational and the irrational elements, explains why they are good and bad. In general, however, all passions are to be checked, because they are opposed to reason and sober judgment, because they too easily lead men to regard them as ends in themselves. The highest good of the soul is to know God, but the passions obscure this knowledge.

Another source of evil is ignorance, of which there are two kinds. From simple ignorance men may commit evil deeds involuntarily, which could not be regarded as having merit or demerit. The same may be said of praiseworthy actions. Whether Philo intends to excuse wicked acts on the ground of ignorance is not clear, but he believes that for this reason we have a conscience within us, which is an unerring accuser and judge. According to Drummond, "Philo's own opinion was that the

---

39. Allegorical Interpretation, III, 67-68.

40. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 303f.

wrongfulness of acts remained, and that actions might, in the abstract, be classified as right and wrong, although, when they were done in ignorance, one could not attach merit or demerit to the individual performing them."[41] The other kind of ignorance is the result of sophistication and false conceit, and this produces voluntary acts of wrong, which are, of course, sinful. For these man is held accountable.

From the progress of the foregoing discussion we have arrived at the conclusion that, according to Philo, man is inherently, at least potentially, good. He has freedom of choice and can elevate himself to the height of beholding God. By quenching the desires and passions, the soul can come into intimate communion with the Divine and can attain virtue. In regard to the latter, Philo speaks of three methods by which virtue may be attained, and in an allegort he sets up the three patriarchs as examples.[42] Abraham, it is said, symbolizes instruction or learning. Through a process of education Abraham was led to God, and was rewarded with faith. Isaac chose a different way. He symbolizes intuition or self-taught wisdom, and his reward was continual joy in God. Jacob chose the way of asceticism and laborious practice. This is the method employed by all those who are not entirely free from the passions. But it has its reward, for Jacob's name was changed to Israel, the name of perfection, which means "the vision of God." And so all three arrived at the same goal, "the direct or mystic vision of God", but they used different means, according to

---

41. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 294.

42. Cf. On the Change of Names, 88.

their own individual nature.

But before drawing our final conclusion as to Philo's way of salvation (if such it can be called), it should be noted that Philo considers God also to be an active agent in man's attainment of virtue. While adhering generally to the Stoic principle that the man who follows reason arrives at virtue, Philo differs in one point, in that he regards man as needing God's help to escape from the senses and the passions. This does not contradict anything that has been said. Rather, it agrees with the principles of his system, particularly, with the function of the Logos, whose duty it is to guide man in the paths of right reason. Since the Logos is reason or the law, it acts as an ally to man, charting the proper course along which man should walk. This is expressed thus:

> "For it must needs be that while the perfect man moves of himself towards virtuous actions, the man who is practicing should do so with the aid of reason [λόγου] which gives him guidance what he should do, obedience to whose directions is a noble thing."[43]

Accordingly, the Pentateuch itself became a group of logoi, or divine thoughts, whose purpose is to guide men. In this connection Philo even speaks of the grace of God, which moves the soul to pleasant thoughts and bestows love for acquiring the morally good.[44] It is not due entirely to man himself that he attains the virtues, but "it is God who through the instrumentality of the intermediary powers plants and fosters the virtues in the soul of man."[45] And so, man works out his

---

43. Allegorical Interpretation, III, 144.

44. Allegorical Interpretation, III, 136-137.

45. Fairweather, op. cit., p. 194.

own blessedness aided by the grace and instrumentality of God.

We have yet one more point to discuss, and that is Philo's view of the final results of life. Here we find no doctrine of a future world, for the universe, according to Philo, will not be destroyed. Nothing in creation dies because everything was made good and beautiful and remains incorruptible.[46] With Philo, the law of retribution is absolute, so that "a wicked man will not lose the reward of a single good deed, though accompanied by so many that are evil, nor may a good man rely upon his numerous good deeds to free him from chastisement, if in any instance he acted wickedly; for God renders everything by balance and weight."[47] Thus, the wicked man is given up to his own desires and pleasures and lives a life of sin. The commonly accepted idea of Hades was with Philo a mere fable; "the true Hades is the life of the wicked man, exposed to vengeance, with uncleansed guilt, obnoxious to every curse."[48] The supreme penalty of the wicked man is seen in these words:

> "That he should live forever in a state of dying and so to speak suffer a death which is deathless and unending . . . so that never by any chance he should have any pleasant sensations or desire anything pleasant, and engrafted in him only the pair [of passions] on the bad side, producing grief unmixed with cheerfulness and fear unrelieved."[49]

For the righteous, on the one hand, there is great reward. This is true, first of all, of the righteous as a people or race.[50]

---

46. Cf. On Creation, 82; see also Who is the Heir of Divine Things, 152.

47. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 322.

48. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 322

49. On Rewards and Punishments, 70-71.

50. Cf. On Rewards and Punishments, 85-126.

They will be blessed with prosperity, happiness, peace and long life. All the people of Israel will finally be assembled to their own land and will enjoy the vision of God.[51] It will be the final triumph of good over the forces of evil. That Philo's speculations on this subject are rather vague can readily be seen. Yet behind these speculations can also be seen Philo the Jew. True to his Jewish belief, he regarded the people of Israel as the chosen race. They are the people who will reach the ultimate good and will behold God. But he did not exclude other nations from the possibility of receiving this reward. It is true, the Israelites had the prerogative, yet all could share in these blessings on the condition that they accepted the God of Israel and the teachings of Moses. On this account he tried to adapt the teachings of Moses to Greek speculation, and to show that Moses had the true way of life.

When we inquire into the reward gained by the individual, we are introduced to Philo's doctrine of ecstacy. The highest good which man can attain is to be absorbed in the divine vision and to lose all consciousness of self and of the world, to receive the illumination of God into ourselves and allow it to work upon us.[52] In moments of rapture the righteous man rises

---

51. It has been suggested that in this doctrine lies Philo's theory of the Messianic hope. On this point I have found three opinions expressed. Bentwich declares that "this, indeed, is the form in which he conceives the Messianic hope." (op. cit., p. 149). Ewald also recognizes the possibility that this may be Philo's conception of the Messiah, but he adds, "the Messianic hopes are practically dissipated." (op. cit., p. 234). Drummond, on the other hand, fails to see any trace of a Messianic hope, and declares that "the identification of the Logos with the Messiah appears to me to be quite untenable." (op. cit., Vol. II, p. 322).

52. Cf. Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, p. 263.

above himself and loses his own consciousness "in the ecstatic contemplation of Deity." This is the height of bliss, for there can be nothing higher, according to Philo, than to commune "alone with the Alone." The righteous souls are emancipated from everything sensual, and, as a result, they "come to the Unbegotten and Eternal, the city of God, the mystical Jerusalem, which signifies the vision of peace; and this is nothing less than the vision of God himself, for God alone is peace." [53]

As a closing remark, we quote these words of Drummond:

> "From the point of view, then, of mere human philosophy, Philo deliberately adopts the formula of the Skeptics; and if instead of being a Skeptic he was an Eclectic, this result was due to his recognition of a supernatural source of knowledge in the Holy Scriptures. That knowledge of the Supreme which the most approved philosophy taught to her votaries came to the Jews through laws and customs in fulfillment of a divine promise. The faith which he derived from this venerable source was brought by Philo as a test to the great problems of philosophy; and if he believed that it was possible, through a wisely directed culture, to attain to the clear and direct intuition of truth, it was here that he recognized the ultimate ground of certitude. The learning of the Greeks only supplied the mould in which his thought was cast; the material was drawn from the best traditions of Hebrew piety. And while he endeavoured to justify by philosophical reasoning the revelations of faith, it was always as a Jewish believer and disciple of Moses that he addressed his appeal to his countrymen and to mankind." [54]

---

53. Drummond, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 323.

54. Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 359.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources

Apocrypha: Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom of Solomon

Philo, Works, with an English translation by F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, The Loeb Classical Library, London: William Heinemann, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1929, 10 Volumes.

Secondary sources

Belkin, S., Philo and the Oral Law, Harvard University Press, 1940.

Bentwich, Norman, Philo Judaeus of Alexandria, Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1910.

Caird, Edward, The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers, Glasgow, James MacLehose & Sons, 1904, 2 Volumes.

Carpenter, Joseph E., The Johannine Writings, London, 1927.

Drummond, James, Philo Judaeus; or, The Jewish-Alexandrian Philosophy in its Development and Completion, London, Williams and Norgate, 1888, 2 Volumes.

Edersheim, Alfred, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, New York, 1907.

Ewald, Georg F. H. A., The History of Israel, London, 1878-86, Volume VII.

Fairweather, William, Jesus and the Greeks, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1924.

Goodenough, Erwin R., An Introduction to Philo Judaeus, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1940.

_____, By Light Light; the Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1935.

Graetz, Heinrich H., History of the Jews, Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1891-98, Volume II.

Schuerer, Emil, A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, Edinburgh, 1901, Volume III.

Stevens, George B., The Theology of the New Testament, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907.

Zeller, Eduard, Die Philosophie der Griechen, Tübingen, 1852, Volume III.

_____, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, Thirteenth Edition, revised by Dr. Wilhelm Nestle and translated by L. R. Palmer, New York, Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1931.

Encyclopedias

Catholic Encyclopedia, "Philo", "Logos".

Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Philo".

Hastings, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, "Alexandrian Theology", "Allegory", "Logos".

Jewish Encyclopedia, "Memra", "Philo", "Wisdom".

Schaff-Herzog, Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, "Logos", "Philo".